

spending increases is also troubling; health care spending has exceeded economic growth in every decade since the 1970s.

These increasing health care costs hit the pocketbook of every American, but our senior citizens, many of whom live on fixed incomes, have a particularly hard time making ends meet while health care costs climb. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, or CMS, recently announced that the Medicare Part B premium, which covers seniors' doctor visits and other nonhospital services, would increase 3.1 percent in 2008. CMS correctly noted in its press release that this is smallest percentage increase in the Part B premium since 2001. However, CMS failed to point out that the amount seniors will pay for Part B premiums in 2008, \$96.40, is more than double what they paid in 2000. Our Nation's seniors simply cannot continue to absorb these skyrocketing health care costs.

This doubling of Part B premiums occurred while many Medicare beneficiaries incurred additional premium costs for the Part D prescription drug program. CMS estimates that premium costs for Part D will average \$25 per month. However, a recent analysis by the Kaiser Family Foundation concludes that seniors enrolled in stand-alone prescription programs will experience a 17-percent increase in their premiums next year. Both Part D and Part B premiums generally are deducted from a senior's Social Security check.

While seniors can expect a modest cost-of-living increase in their Social Security benefits every year, this increase has not kept up with the pace of increased health care costs and specifically Medicare premium costs. The Social Security Administration, SSA, announced that all Social Security and Supplemental Security Income, SSI, beneficiaries would receive a 2.3-percent cost-of-living adjustment, COLA, beginning in January 2008. Each year, Social Security benefits are updated based on the overall rate of inflation as calculated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. COLAs are not intended to provide anybody with a "raise" but are instead intended to ensure that a beneficiary's monthly payment has the same buying power that it had the year before. A 2.3-percent increase isn't much but should help retirees and individuals with disabilities living on a fixed income survive as the prices of food, housing, clothing, and other goods continue to increase.

I know that Social Security beneficiaries need every penny of their COLA, and it is important that rising Medicare costs not completely consume the Social Security COLA. In 1986, a hold-harmless provision took ef-

fect to ensure that no beneficiary's Medicare Part B premium increase could exceed his or her Social Security COLA in any given year. This ensured that no senior would receive a reduced Social Security check due to a Part B premium increase. However, this hold-harmless provision does not apply to Part D premiums, and the increasing cost of both programs is quickly consuming any small increase beneficiaries see in their Social Security checks. This policy is subjecting the incomes of retirees and individuals with disabilities to a tight squeeze. Without a legislative change, millions of retirees will likely see much or all of their COLA wiped out by increases in Medicare premiums over the next several years. We owe it to America's seniors to protect the COLA from being completely consumed by Medicare premium increases.

This is why I have introduced the Social Security COLA Protection Act of 2007, which will protect retirees by ensuring that no more than 25 percent of a senior's COLA is absorbed by the increase in Medicare premiums. This important legislation will protect the financial security of many retirees in my home State and across the country. I thank all of the Members who have introduced this bill with me and urge the rest of my colleagues to join us in our effort.

SPENDING IDENTIFICATION

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the following letter and attachment be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE, COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC, February 4, 2008.

HON. HARRY REID,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. LEADER: S. 2483, the National Forests, Parks, Public Land, and Reclamation Projects Authorization Act of 2007, is a collection of 56 separate legislative measures under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Forty-five consist of the text of separate bills passed by the House of Representatives, nine are drawn from separate subtitles of another House-passed bill, and one is a House-passed concurrent resolution. Only one provision, section 482, contains new matter that has not passed the House of Representatives. A complete list of the House bills (and their Senate companion measures, where they exist) was printed in the Congressional Record on December 13, 2007, at pages S15474-S15475.

I assembled the 56 measures into a single bill in order to facilitate their consideration by the Senate. Although S. 2483 was placed on the Calendar without referral to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources,

most of the House bills that make up S. 2483 have been reported, or ordered reported, by the Committee.

Rule XLIV of the Standing Rules of the Senate provides that, before proceeding to the consideration of a bill, the chairman of the committee of jurisdiction must certify that each congressionally designated spending item in the bill and the name of the Senator requesting it has been identified and posted on a publicly accessible website. The term "congressionally designated spending item" is broadly defined, in pertinent part, to include "a provision . . . included primarily at the request of a Senator . . . authorizing . . . a specific amount of discretionary budget authority . . . for . . . expenditure with or to an entity, or targeted to a specific State, locality or Congressional district, other than through a statutory or administrative formula-driven or competitive award process."

Ten of the House-passed bills incorporated into S. 2483 contain provisions authorizing the appropriation of specific amounts targeted to specific entities or localities. These authorizations are included in S. 2483 because they are part of the House-passed text. No Senator submitted a request to me to include them.

In the interest of furthering the transparency and accountability of the legislative process, however, I have posted a list of the specific authorizations in S. 2483 on the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources' website. The list includes the name of the principal sponsor of the Senate companion measure that corresponds to the House-passed bill. A copy of the list is attached for your convenience.

In addition, I have asked the principal sponsor of the Senate companion measure of each House bill contained in S. 2483 to certify that neither the Senator nor the Senator's immediate family has a pecuniary interest in the item, and have posted the certifications on the Committee's website. All certifications received by the Committee pursuant to paragraph 6 of Rule XLIV are posted on the Committee's website as soon as practicable after they are received in accordance with paragraph 6(b).

Thus, in accordance with Rule XLIV of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby certify that each congressionally directed spending item in S. 2483 has been identified through a list and that the list was posted on the Committee's publicly accessible website at approximately 2:30 p.m. on February 4, 2008.

Sincerely,

JEFF BINGAMAN,
Chairman.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED SPENDING ITEM CERTIFICATION PURSUANT TO RULE XLIV OF THE STANDING RULES OF THE SENATE

S. 2483—THE NATIONAL FORESTS, PARKS, PUBLIC LAND, AND RECLAMATION ACT OF 2007

Provisions in S. 2483 authorizing appropriations in a specific amount for expenditure with or to an entity or targeted to a specific State, locality, or congressional district, other than through a statutory or administrative formula-driven or competitive award process:

Section	Program or entity	State	Senate bill sponsor
333(e)	American Latino Museum Commission	DC	Salazar.
334(j)	Hudson-Fulton and Champlain Commissions	NY & VT	Clinton.
342(f)	Lewis & Clark Visitor Center	NE	Hagel.
409	Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area	VA	Warner.
430	Niagara Falls National Heritage Area	NY	Schumer.
449	Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area	IL	Durbin.

Section	Program or entity	State	Senate bill sponsor
461	Multiple National Heritage Areas	OH, PA, MA, SC	Voinovich.
504(d)	Watkins Dam	WV TN, GA, IA, & NY	none.
505	New Mexico water planning assistance	UT	Hatch.
509	Multiple Oregon water projects	NM	Domenici.
511	Eastern Municipal Water District	OR	Smith/Wyden.
512	Inland Empire & Cucamonga water projects	CA	Feinstein.
513	Bay Area water recycling program	CA	Feinstein.

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

REMEMBERING FORMER PRESIDENT RAFIQ HARIRI

• Mr. OBAMA. Madam President, the continued deadlock over Lebanon's Presidency brings further instability to an important country in the Middle East. We cannot idly stand by as an emerging democracy whose people have long ties to the United States teeters on the verge of collapse. The United States must turn the page on the Bush administration's failed Lebanon policy and replace hollow rhetoric with sustained diplomatic engagement. We must work with our European and Arab allies to foster a new Lebanese consensus around a stable and democratic Lebanon.

With the approach of the third anniversary of the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri, our thoughts are with the Lebanese people as they struggle against extremist forces and continued intervention in their national affairs by Syria and Iran. Across the broader Middle East, the failures of the Bush administration are everywhere manifest. Instead of defeating extremists and elevating the cause of freedom, the administration's Middle East record includes an unfinished war in Afghanistan; a war in Iraq that should have never been authorized that has cost us precious lives, trillions of dollars, the readiness of our military, and our standing in the world; a too-long neglected Israeli-Palestinian peace process; and an emboldened Iran taking advantage of waning American influence throughout the region, and our refusal to use direct diplomacy to advance our interests.

Add to this string of failures the state of affairs in deeply divided Lebanon, once heralded by the President as a stepping stone in his "forward march of freedom." During its first term, the Bush administration largely ignored the country. It took the brutal assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in February of 2005 to wake it from its stupor. At that time, the administration acted appropriately and pressed the Syrians to end their oppressive presence in Lebanon and called for an international effort to identify and punish those responsible for the assassination.

But, as with many parts of the world, the administration trumpeted the Cedar Revolution as its own success when the real credit should have gone to the people of Lebanon. And, as is often the case, there was no follow-through by the administration to consolidate democratic gains, and momentum was lost.

As a result, the hope and opportunity for change that characterized Lebanon 2 years ago has been replaced by cynicism and renewed civil strife. In that time, Lebanon has witnessed a string of political assassinations aimed at critics of Syrian influence that threaten to undermine the very foundations of its democracy; a devastating war between Israel and Hizbullah; a deepening political standoff between the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and the opposition; and a long and bloody confrontation between Lebanon's army and an al-Qaida-inspired group of extremists.

It is time to engage in diplomatic efforts to help build a new Lebanese consensus. These efforts should focus on the need for electoral reform, an end to the current corrupt patronage system, and the development of the economy so as to provide for a fair distribution of services, opportunities, and employment.

The United States can play a positive role in helping achieve this consensus. We should support the efforts of our Arab allies and work with them to promote compromise among Lebanon's disparate groups. We should support the implementation of all U.N. reforms including the tribunal established to try those accused of assassinating former Prime Minister Hariri. We should work with our European allies and the Sarkozy government in France in calling for an all-party intra-Lebanese dialogue. Finally, we must make clear that part of any national compact must be the disarmament of all militias.

Moreover, we must support the implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions that reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty, especially resolution 1701 banning the provision of arms to Hizbullah, which is violated by Iran and Syria. As we push for national consensus, we should continue to support the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Siniora, strengthen the Lebanese army, and insist on the disarming of Hizbullah, before it drags Lebanon into another unnecessary war. And it is vital that we work with the international community and private sector to rebuild Lebanon and get its economy back on its feet.

As the tragic events of the past few years make clear, what happens in Lebanon affects other American priorities in the region, including the fight against al-Qaida and other extremists, as well as opportunities for regional stability and peace. To neglect Lebanon would not only serve our interests badly, it would fail a nation whose people have suffered too much for too long a nation that could now be on the edge of a new precipice.●

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

IN MEMORY OF EARL GREENBERG

• Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I wish to honor the life of an amazing Californian, Earl Greenberg. Earl recently died from cancer in his adopted home of Palm Springs. He will be missed by so many there and by all those whose lives he touched around the Nation.

Earl Greenberg's life was marked by an enduring sense of optimism that all things were possible. In the entertainment industry, he created hit television shows and won an Emmy Award. But his contributions went far beyond the entertainment and business worlds. Earl worked every day to make people's lives better, and he had the unique gift of convincing countless others to join him in that noble task.

In the desert region, Earl led in the creation of the Palm Springs International Film Festival, which has become a truly international event, drawing hundreds of thousands to see the very best in film.

In 1994, when his partner, Rick Weiss, died of AIDS, Earl turned his profound grief into action to change lives. He created the Weiss Apartments in Santa Monica where people with HIV/AIDS can live. He also created the Rick Weiss Humanitarian Awards to raise funds to help organizations that seek a cure and help people living with HIV/AIDS.

His good works did not stop there. Earl was also active with the Desert Cancer Society, Desert AIDS Project, Barbara Sinatra Children's Center, Angel View Crippled Children Foundation, Shelter from the Storm, AIDS Assistance Program, the Stroke Activity Center, and Eisenhower Medical Center, giving both his time and money to improve lives and restore health.

My heart goes out to all of Earl's loved ones. Earl's business and life partner is David Peet. Together they shared a love for one another and a true zest for life. I know David will do whatever he can to continue Earl's work. Earl was a loving father. He is survived by his son, Ari Greenberg, daughter, Kathryn Claire, grandchildren, and brothers. I share my deepest condolences for their loss.

Meeting Earl was such an honor for me, and watching him work was always a learning and inspiring experience. While so many in the desert and across California grieve today because of his loss, we know that countless people are