

How come you didn't come in earlier? Two of them said: We work at a small business; we didn't want the premiums to go up. It would hurt everyone at the small business. Another said: I had such high premiums I would have to pay I didn't want to come in and have it checked out.

If you do not have that kind of safety net in place for people, you get more expenses on the far end. That is what this bill does. It changes the delivery system, insuring 31 million more people.

What else does it do? It helps to reduce the deficit. That is what I said from the beginning. I do not want to support a bill that adds to the deficit. Actually, this bill we are talking about—some changes are being made—reduces the deficit by billions and billions of dollars.

A third thing: What does this bill have? Insurance reforms. What does that mean? It means if you have a sick kid, you no longer are going to lose your insurance. You cannot be pushed off, put off in the deep end all by yourself if your kid gets sick. It means if you have a kid going to college, you can keep them on your insurance until they are 26 years old. That is what the bill does. It gives a safety net, consumer protections that people in this country have demanded.

Finally, with Medicare, it adds 9 years onto the life of Medicare. Right now, Medicare is scheduled to go into the red by 2017. No one wants to talk about it. We need to talk about it. What this bill does is keep it solvent for 9 more years.

I can tell you, my mom, who is 82, wants to stay on Medicare until she is way into her nineties. People in their fifties who want to get on Medicare at 65 want to make sure it is there for them, that it is solvent.

What this bill does with the reforms that are in it, with the promotion of high quality, closing that doughnut hole, which is difficult for seniors, it helps our seniors. This is an idea, someone said today—I was listening to other Members—whose time has come. This bill is not going to be perfect for everyone. I think about the people I heard from, such as the woman who wrote to me from northern Minnesota. She wrote this heartfelt letter about how she had gotten a call from her daughter whose husband worked at a small business. She said that husband, her son-in-law, had just found out they were not going to have insurance anymore at his small business. The woman who wrote, the mom, said she couldn't even understand her daughter. The daughter was sobbing, sobbing: What is wrong? What is wrong? What happened? I lost my insurance.

Do you know why this mattered so much for her family? Her daughter has cystic fibrosis. Her daughter needs this insurance every moment of her life. When that small business yanked that insurance coverage because they probably had to—I am sure they didn't

want to, but they just couldn't afford it anymore—that daughter has to go on the open market now which, if you have a preexisting condition, is not an easy thing to do. She may not get insurance. That is what we are talking about when we talk about this bill.

At the end of the letter, the mom said: I need you to be my daughter's voice. She is not going to be able to go to Washington, DC, and lobby for this like all the companies that have come over here and lobbied for this thing and that thing. She needs us to be her voice, and that is what this is about.

The good thing here is that, as we look at some of the things in the bill, I didn't get everything I wanted to reduce costs, I can tell you that right now. But there are some great provisions in this bill.

Look at this. According to researchers at Dartmouth Medical School, nearly \$700 billion per year is wasted on unnecessary or ineffective health care. That is 30 percent of total health care spending.

To rein in costs, we introduced a value index. I introduced a bill—Senator CANTWELL, Senator GREGG are co-authors of this bill. Senator CANTWELL got it on the Finance Committee bill and it is still in the merged bill today. What that does is it says, when you look at the Medicare fees, evaluate them on a lot of things but make sure you evaluate them on value. This indexing will help reduce unnecessary procedures because those who produce more volume will need to also improve care or the increased volume will negatively impact their fees.

Doctors will have a financial incentive to maximize quality and value of their services instead of quantity. My doctors in the State of Minnesota support this. They have supported this bill. They have endorsed this bill. They understand that if we want to get that high-quality care like we see in Minnesota in places such as the Mayo Clinic, the Cleveland Clinic, Intermountain, Kaiser—all over the country—you have to have those kinds of incentives in place.

This bill also focuses on bundling and integrated care. I was thinking, as I watched the Vikings game this weekend—I do not know if you noticed, but the Vikings won again; Brett Favre is quarterback—we are talking about a primary care provider who works with a team. We do not have 15 wide receivers running into each other. We have one person in charge—a quarterback in football, a primary care doctor in medicine—working with a team, with a wide receiver, with a tight end, with all the team they have working together, whether it is a cardiologist, whether it is a urologist, whether it is any kind of a doctor they want to work with as a team, depending on what the illness is. That is what integrated care is. You work as a team, share medical records. Patients do not get lost in the shuffle. They do not get sent to one specialist and another specialist without anyone

watching over their care. That is what integrated care is about, a quarterback with a team.

The other thing about this bill is, we start to focus much more, as I mentioned, on reducing readmissions, on rewarding places such as Health Partners or St. Mary's in Duluth, places that work to have this integrated care, places that make sure we have less readmissions in the hospitals.

Finally—and I am pleased we got this in the freshman package that is coming out—there is a much bigger focus on fraud in the system. Mr. President, \$60 billion a year is going down the tubes, going to fraudsters, to con men, siphoning off the system by storefronts that are not doctors' clinics that claim they should get some of the reimbursements that should be going to our seniors. That is \$60 billion in Medicare fraud alone every single year.

There are increased penalties with tools to make sure we are better enforcing the law. We can reclaim some of that money and give it to the American taxpayers, give it to our seniors.

Those are a few things. I will be talking more about this, this week, when we focus on and talk about cost control in this bill.

Thank you for allowing me to share some of my thoughts on cost. Again, remember 6, 12, 24. Ten years ago, the average American family was paying \$6,000 for their premiums. Now what are they spending? They are spending \$12,000. What are they going to spend 10 years from now if we don't do anything? They will spend \$24,000 to \$36,000 a year. We know this is not going to be easy to bend this cost curve. We know there are going to be bumps in the road. We know it is not going to automatically turn itself around. To do nothing, to put our heads in the sand at this moment in history is just plain wrong. The American people deserve to have better health care. They deserve to have that high-quality, low-cost care, and this bill is the beginning.

I yield the floor.

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I want to express my strong support for the Omnibus appropriations act for fiscal year 2010, H.R. 3288. This bill combines six appropriations bills that provide funding for essential programs related to improving education, housing, and transportation; increasing research opportunities; providing justice; strengthening our foreign operations; constructing needed military facilities; and caring for our Nation's veterans. I thank the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senators INOUE and COCHRAN, as well as the various subcommittee chairmen and ranking members, for their efforts to bring this important bill to the floor.

I am pleased that included in this bill is funding for a number of K-12 and postsecondary educational initiatives,

as well as cultural and financial literacy efforts. These programs will benefit Hawaii and the Nation and are especially critical now when States are facing increased financial pressure. These investments in education will aid individuals and society as a whole by helping to better prepare our keiki, our children, for tomorrow's challenges.

For elementary and secondary education, resources in the act support such areas as history, science, literacy, and college prep. I supported additional resources for National History Day, a program that encourages more than half a million students each year to research, synthesize, and interpret primary and secondary sources in order to create an original work for the programs' annual contest. As science, technology, engineering, and math, STEM, are four subjects whose study is critical to national goals, the Maui Economic Development Board and Kauai Economic Development Board will work to advance STEM education and careers for students from underrepresented groups on Maui and Kauai using appropriations in this act. I also joined a number of my colleagues in working to fund Reach Out and Read, a nonprofit organization that makes use of pediatric doctor's visits as a teachable moment on the importance of parents reading to their children. Additionally, the Consolidated Appropriations Act will assist programs that prepare high school students for college at Hawaii Community College, Leeward Community College, and the Pacific Islands Center for Educational Development.

Included among the postsecondary initiatives in the bill are two programs at the Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, one of which comprehensively works to address issues relating to Native Hawaiians and the law and a second that will create a center on health policy. The bill will also allow the University of Hawaii at Hilo to expand programs at the Imiloa Astronomy Education Center and to establish a clinical training and applied science programs at the state's only pharmacy school.

I believe that historic preservation is necessary to ensure that future generations benefit from an understanding of their heritage and that cultural programs are integral to a broad-based education in a multicultural nation and interconnected world. Therefore, I am pleased that the Henry Giugni Kupuna Memorial Archives at the University of Hawaii, Bishop Museum, and Polynesian Voyaging Society will receive funding.

In addition, this bill includes vital financial education resources. My Excellence in Economic Education, EEE, Act program will receive \$1.447 million for fiscal year 2010. The Triple-E funds a range of activities such as teacher training, research and evaluation, and school-based activities to further economic principles and ensure that our

students are more financially literate. Financial literacy in schools is essential to ensure that students are able to be prepared to effectively participate in the modern complex economy. Moreover, I was pleased to continue my efforts in championing financial literacy efforts by backing provisions for the Council for Economic Education and Center for Civic Education.

Additionally, the Department of Treasury's Office of Financial Education will have an increase of \$1 million to further their efforts, revise the national strategy on financial literacy, and develop measurable goals and objectives for the Financial Literacy and Education Commission.

One of the fundamental causes of the financial crisis was that people were steered into mortgages with risks and costs they could not afford or even understand. The Financial Education and Pre-Home Counseling Pilot Program was authorized pursuant to section 1132 of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008, Public Law 110-289. I am proud that the chairman of the Appropriations Committee and I were able to secure \$3.15 million for a demonstration program in Hawaii. This program will strengthen the CDFI Fund's support for a range of financial education and counseling services to prospective homebuyers and address critical financial literacy needs of families.

This is a competitive grant that will be awarded by the Department of the Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund. Grants awarded through the Pilot Program will have the ultimate goal of identifying successful methods of financial education and counseling services that result in positive behavioral change for financial empowerment and establishing program models for organizations to deliver effective financial education and counseling services to prospective homebuyers.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition's Out of Reach report ranked Hawaii as the most expensive State for housing. As credit has become harder to obtain and downpayment requirements for home purchases have significantly increased, working families in Hawaii need assistance to better prepare for purchasing a home. These services can include credit counseling, assisting with savings planning, and educating potential home buyers about mortgage products and available programs intended to support home ownership. Pre-home ownership counseling helps prepare prospective homeowners to be better able to purchase a home and select an appropriate mortgage product and increases the likelihood that families will be able to remain in their homes. This project will focus on providing assistance to low- and moderate-income prospective home buyers in under served communities. The Government Accountability Office is required to study the impact and effectiveness of the demonstration grants authorized by section 1132.

Additionally, the legislation provides necessary resources for housing and transportation. Thirteen million dollars is provided for the Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant, which is administered in the State of Hawaii by the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, DHHL. These resources are extremely important to support additional home ownership opportunities for residents throughout Hawaii. DHHL is the largest housing developer in the State of Hawaii.

In addition to having high housing costs, Honolulu has among the Nation's worst driving travel times. That is why I am pleased that this bill contains Federal dollars to supplement the substantial local investment in the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project. Furthermore, I am glad that the Neighbor Islands will receive needed resources for their rural bus service. These projects will help to reduce our reliance on imported fuels that pollute our islands, promote economic development and provide additional transportation options for our State's families.

A number of programs through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the Consolidated Appropriations Act will also assist my State. Funding for Hawaiian monk seal recovery plan implementation furthers work to protect the less than 1,200 monk seals living today, while funds for coral reef maintenance are important to coastal communities in terms of supporting tourism, fisheries, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and shoreline protection. The bill's funding of \$2 million facilitates a University of Hawaii, University of Mississippi, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and University of California San Diego consortium dedicated to employing infrasound, or low-frequency sound, as a warning tool for natural hazards, such as volcanic eruptions and tsunamis, having the potential for catastrophic human and economic impacts to taxpayers. Efforts at the International Pacific Research Center, IPRC, within the University of Hawaii School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology are also supported by \$1.5 million in funding. The IPRC makes data resources readily accessible and usable to researchers and the general public and conducts data-intensive climate research activities.

The bill also includes provisions that will help to improve the effectiveness of State and local justice systems to enforce the laws, bring criminals to justice, address the needs of crime victims, and prevent crime and delinquency. In particular, this bill includes \$500,000 for the National Center for State Courts, NCSC, which serves as a think tank, forum, and voice for 30,000 judges, and 20,000 courthouses, in the State court system in the 50 States, DC, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa, where annually 98 percent of court filings are submitted. Funding in this bill

will implement the NCSC's State Courts Improvement Initiative to provide increased support services to judges, administrators, and other personnel in the State court system as well as help to shape and bolster Americans' understanding of and confidence in the Nation's judicial system. I am also pleased that this bill provides \$300,000 to the Hawaii Innocence Project, which provides pro bono assistance to Hawaii prisoners with credible claims of actual innocence who no longer have access to legal resources and whose innocence may now be proven by technology unavailable at the time of their trials.

To address the needs of victims and prevent crime and delinquency, I am pleased that the bill provides \$400,000 to enable both the Hawaii and Kauai YWCAs to continue their programs to address sexual and domestic violence and provide services for victims of such violence. It also provides \$500,000 for A Child Is Missing, ACIM, Hawaii, which will provide the critical rapid response that will assist Hawaii law enforcement agencies to locate missing children and adults. In addition, \$350,000 is provided for Ka Wili Pu—Native Hawaiian for "the blend"—which will provide 400 at-risk youth on Maui with adult guidance and adult role models and one-on-one instruction to encourage them to remain in school, fulfill their promise, avoid a problematic future with few meaningful options while promoting a healthy and stable society. To help provide cost-effective legal, medical, psychological, and social services to indigent immigrant women, the bill also provides \$200,000 for the Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center to help prevent violence against women.

In addition to providing for our domestic needs, the bill provides critical funding to improve our foreign relations. I am particularly pleased by two programs funded by this bill: the East West Center, which will receive \$23 million, and the U.S. Institute of Peace, which will receive \$19.2 million. The Hawaii-based East West Center is a premier U.S. public diplomacy program focusing on Asia and the Pacific and is a vital tool to promote U.S. values and interests in the region. The funding provided by this bill will allow existing programs to continue and provide additional funds for program enhancements and some facility upgrades.

The U.S. Institute of Peace, a national center of research, education, and training on conflict management, works to resolve international conflicts by peaceful means without violence and war. The USIP was championed by former Senator Spark Matsunaga, and I am pleased to see the vital work of this institution continue, especially in this current international climate.

Significant funding for military construction projects is also included in this bill, which will support the construction of troop barracks, mission critical operational facilities, support

the construction needs of the Guard and Reserves, and the construction of military family housing, child care centers, and chapels. We must continue to provide for our troops and their families as they sacrifice so much for this Nation.

I am particularly pleased that my request for a shipyard modernization project at the Pearl Harbor Naval Station was authorized and appropriated at \$25 million. Shipyard modernization is essential to give our workers the opportunity to most efficiently maintain and repair our fleet. The Production Services Support Facility is a much needed step in the right direction. In addition, my request for an additional runway at Kona was approved as funding was included for the planning and design of a C-17 short auxiliary airfield. Once completed, this will allow Hickam AFB C-17 aircrews to complete their required training in the local area instead of travelling the 16-hour round trip to the mainland.

In addition to ensuring that our military members have the facilities necessary to assist in the performance of their duties, this bill ensures that our military members are taken care of when they return home. As chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I am pleased that the Omnibus appropriations bill includes strong funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, in recognition of the fact that caring for veterans is a cost of war and must be funded as such. Funding for VA would be substantially increased, billions of dollars above the previous budget. This funding will allow VA to improve care for veterans of all service-eras and further the administration's goal of opening enrollment for more than 500,000 veterans of modest incomes by providing VA with the resources to prepare for them in the coming years. The bill also fully funds VA's research programs, which are vital to improving the Department's ability to treat the signature wounds of the current conflicts and develop other improvements that will help veterans and nonveterans alike.

I am delighted that for the first time VA will receive advance appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for three VA medical care accounts. This coincides with the landmark legislation, Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009, which was signed into law as Public Law 111-81 by the President on October 22, 2009. Funding VA health care in advance will go a long way toward resolving the problematic underfunding of VA health care, which left so many of the Nation's veterans with unmet health care needs.

Importantly, this bill contains an amendment I offered that will extend VA's authority to operate the Manila VA Regional Office. I extend my deepest thanks to the staff of the Manila Regional Office who have continued to demonstrate unwavering dedication to their duty to assist Filipino World War

II veterans and indeed all veterans who apply for benefits from VA. Earlier this year, more than 60 years after the end of the World War II, surviving Filipino World War II veterans who served under U.S. military command received a measure of compensation for their service in the form of a one-time lump sum payment. Dispersing these payments has been a significant challenge as a series of steps are required to authenticate their World War II service. In addition, the Manila Regional Office administers Social Security in the Philippines while at the same time administering compensation, pension, vocational rehabilitation, employment, and education benefits to over 18,000 individuals. Without this extension, VA's authority to operate the Manila VA Regional Office would have expired on December 31, 2009.

These are just some of the projects and programs this important bill will fund for the 2010 fiscal year. Once again, I want to thank the hard work of the Appropriations Committee for bringing this bill before us today, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, the Senate voted Sunday on final passage of the conference report to accompany H.R. 3288, the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for 2010. I was unable to vote because I was attending my son's college graduation ceremony at the University of Minnesota, which occurred at the same time as the Senate vote. Had I been present during the vote, I would have voted in favor of the legislation.

CRIMINAL SENTENCING

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, with over 2 million inmates, many who are in prison for nonviolent drug offenses, the United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. In recent years, we have rightly begun to question how our criminal justice system can better ensure our communities are safe and free of drugs and violence, while fostering healthy families and communities through drug treatment and rehabilitation for those who are not violent or a danger to society. That is why I cosponsored the Second Chance Act, which became law last Congress. It is also why I am a proud cosponsor of S. 714, the National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2009, introduced by Senator WEBB.

As we engage in a dialogue regarding the criminal justice system, I strongly recommend to my colleagues recent remarks Chief Judge Robert W. Pratt of the Southern District of Iowa made before the U.S. Sentencing Commission. Chief Judge Pratt authored the trial court decision in *Gall v. United States*, where the Supreme Court provided for greater discretion for Federal court judges in imposing criminal sentences, and he has become one of the leading