

Proponents argue that such cost-benefit analysis has to figure into health-care decisions, and that any medical system rations care in some way. And it is true that U.S. private insurers also deny reimbursement for some kinds of care. The core issue is whether those decisions are going to be dictated by the brute force of politics (NICE) or by prices (a private insurance system).

The last six months of life are a particularly difficult moral issue because that is when most health-care spending occurs. But who would you rather have making decisions about whether a treatment is worth the price—the combination of you, your doctor and a private insurer, or a government board that cuts everyone off at \$22,000?

One virtue of a private system is that competition allows choice and experimentation. To take an example from one of our recent editorials, Medicare today refuses to reimburse for the new, less invasive preventive treatment known as a virtual colonoscopy, but such private insurers as Cigna and United Healthcare do. As clinical evidence accumulates on the virtual colonoscopy, doctors and insurers will be able to adjust their practices accordingly. NICE merely issues orders, and patients have little recourse.

This has medical consequences. The Concord study published in 2008 showed that cancer survival rates in Britain are among the worst in Europe. Five-year survival rates among U.S. cancer patients are also significantly higher than in Europe: 84% vs. 73% for breast cancer, 92% vs. 57% for prostate cancer. While there is more than one reason for this difference, surely one is medical innovation and the greater U.S. willingness to reimburse for it.

\* \* \*

The NICE precedent also undercuts the Obama Administration's argument that vast health savings can be gleaned simply by automating health records or squeezing out "waste." Britain has tried all of that but ultimately has concluded that it can only rein in costs by limiting care. The logic of a health-care system dominated by government is that it always ends up with some version of a NICE board that makes these life-or-death treatment decisions. The Administration's new Council for Comparative Effectiveness Research currently lacks the authority of NICE. But over time, if the Obama plan passes and taxpayer costs inevitably soar, it could quickly gain it.

Mr. Obama and Democrats claim they can expand subsidies for tens of millions of Americans, while saving money and improving the quality of care. It can't possibly be done. The inevitable result of their plan will be some version of a NICE board that will tell millions of Americans that they are too young, or too old, or too sick to be worth paying to care for.

#### CRISIS IN HONDURAS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to speak briefly about the current political crisis in Honduras. Vermont and Honduras have had a long, close relationship through the Partners of the Americas, and many Vermonters regularly travel to Honduras to engage in health care and other humanitarian and development work in rural communities.

Last week a lawfully elected President—Manuel Zelaya—was forcibly removed from office and flown to a neighboring country by the Honduran military. The military and the Supreme Court apparently believed that

President Zelaya was acting in a manner that was contrary to the Honduran Constitution. While such an accusation is troubling, military coups cannot be condoned, particularly when Honduras' Constitution contains provisions to handle such concerns—impeachment, for one.

The sooner the Honduran military reverses course and allows President Zelaya to return the better it will be for Honduras and all of Central America. He has pledged to leave office at the end of his term, unlike other Latin American leaders who seem to believe constitutions are to be amended with the stroke of a pen so they can remain in office. When President Zelaya returns, if there is credible evidence that he broke laws, he should be held accountable in accordance with the laws of the country.

While I condemn the actions of the Honduran military, I applaud the efforts of the Organization of American States, with the support of the Obama administration, to defuse this situation diplomatically. Removing Honduras' membership and beginning to impose sanctions in concert with widespread international condemnation is the appropriate response.

We should also recognize that the people of Honduras appear to be deeply divided over President Zelaya. Rural Hondurans in particular have been dissatisfied with his performance as President. When he returns to office I hope he reconsiders his priorities and focuses his efforts on improving the lives of the people of Honduras who are most in need of the government's assistance.

#### HOSPITAL QUALITY REPORT CARD ACT

Mr. JOHANNNS. Mr. President, I wish to speak to the Department of Veterans Affairs Hospital Quality Report Card Act of 2009.

One of my proudest jobs in the Senate is serving on the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Among its other roles, this committee provides oversight of VA health facilities, working with information from the VA, its Inspector General, Veterans Service Organizations, and the general public. We work with a lot of information—it is, after all, our committee's job. But sifting through a pile of reports to find the best hospitals should not be a full time job for those who need health care. This bill will help ensure that it is not.

Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this bill, the VA would be mandated to establish a Hospital Quality Report Card Initiative. Under the Initiative, the Secretary would be required to publish reports on the VA's hospitals which assess health care effectiveness, safety, timeliness, efficiency, patient-centeredness, satisfaction of patients and health professionals, and care equity. These factors would be assessed as letter grades, to ensure that the results of these reports are not swabbed over with bureaucratic jargon.

In collecting and reporting this data, the Secretary would have to include extensive and detailed patient-centered information such as staffing levels of nurses, rates of infections contracted at VA hospitals, volume of various procedures performed, hospital sanctions and other violations, the availability of emergency rooms, the quality of care in various hospital settings, and additional measures determined appropriate by the VA Secretary. Each report submitted under the Initiative would have to be available in electronic and hard copy formats, in an understandable manner, and allow for a comparison of the individual VA hospital quality with local or regional hospitals.

The bill would further mandate that the Secretary institute quality control measures to identify potential data irregularities that would lead to artificial improvements in the hospital's quality measurements. In addition, the Secretary would need to evaluate and periodically report to Congress—and the public—on the effectiveness of this Initiative.

I believe that our veterans should easily be able to identify the best hospitals around them. It is unconscionable to make often elderly and disabled veterans wade through pages of statistical data in order to assure themselves that their local VA health facility is providing the best care possible. Often, the factors veterans care about such as the wait times for appointments and medical attention—are not measured reliably or presented to veterans in an accessible or usable fashion. I want to change that. Information on health facilities should not be a privilege; it should be an obligation for the Department of Veterans Affairs. This legislation is a positive step in the right direction.

I encourage my colleagues to cosponsor this commonsense legislation.

#### COMMENDING ARNOLD PALMER

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, today, I honor one of the great sports legends of all time, Arnold Palmer. Not only is Arnold Palmer a world-class athlete, he is a generous philanthropist and devoted husband, father, and grandfather. This son of Latrobe, PA, changed the game of golf, both how it is played and how it is appreciated, forever.

Mr. Palmer learned how to play golf when he was merely 4 years old, playing with clubs his father had cut down for him at Latrobe Country Club. His talent emerged visibly at an early age, and he was soon able to outplay children far older than him. He began to caddy when he was 11 years old and later held almost every job at the country club. In his late teens, he also served as a member of the U.S. Coast Guard.

His seven major career victories make Mr. Palmer one of the greatest golfers of all time. He won the Masters Tournament four times in 1958, 1960,

1962, and 1964; the U.S. Open in 1960 and the British Open in 1961 and 1962. He twice represented the United States in the Ryder Cup Match, including serving as captain of the victorious American team in 1963.

In 1997, he successfully battled prostate cancer and is a champion of programs supporting cancer research and early detection. In addition to the numerous charities he supports, Mr. Palmer led a fundraising drive creating the Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children in Orlando and the Latrobe Area Hospital Charitable Foundation.

Mr. Palmer has led by example in kindness, good sportsmanship, and generosity. Today, along with my colleagues, I ask Congress to award Mr. Palmer a gold medal in recognition of his service to the Nation in promoting excellence and good sportsmanship in golf.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### REMEMBERING JOHANNA JUSTIN-JINICH

• Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, on Wednesday, May 6, 2009, Johanna Justin-Jinich, a resident of Timnath, CO, was senselessly murdered in Middletown, CT. Johanna was a member of the Class of 2010 at Wesleyan University—my alma mater. Faculty and students alike describe a vibrant, intelligent, creative, and compassionate young woman. A young woman whose short life was full of exuberance and study—and public service. Johanna's friends note that her warmth, passion, and dedication to those she loved that defined her life to the very end. And these qualities are what they will miss the most.

Johanna's family and her friends have suffered an unspeakable loss and will no doubt continue to grieve for the loss of someone so compassionate, so dedicated, and so giving. Wesleyan University and the town of Timnath have witnessed the passing of one too young and with so much potential to serve the public good. She was particularly committed to helping women gain access to proper health care and resources, regardless of their means. Johanna's concern for public health can be traced back to her family. Her maternal grandmother, a Holocaust survivor, was a doctor, as are both of her parents.

As Wesleyan's president, Michael Roth, said "We return to the rhythms of our campus lives with the memory of our loss still very fresh. We turn again, and we remember. May Johanna's memory be a blessing to us all."•

##### COMMENDING CUSTOM CORDAGE, LLC

• Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, today I recognize the contributions of a tremendously innovative small business

from my home State of Maine—Custom Cordage, LLC—that has taken on the mission of helping lobstermen dispose of their old, unusable rope by transforming it into charming gifts.

When Maine lobstermen went to set their traps this spring, they first had to replace the rope they used to connect one lobster trap to another as the result of a new regulation banning the use of traditional floating rope. It requires lobster pots to be linked with sink-rope, the goal being to reduce the risk of entangling whales. Regrettably, Maine's lobstermen face a financial burden as the new sink-rope can cost twice as much as float-rope and is far more expensive to maintain. Additionally, the new regulation threatened to result in hundreds of thousands of pounds of unusable rope clogging local landfills.

Aware of this mounting problem for Maine's lobstermen, David Bird, owner of Custom Cordage, a Waldoboro company that manufactures a variety of rope, cord, and similar products, decided last summer to begin making doormats out of retired float-rope. This colorful float-rope is uniquely weathered by seasons of use and exposure to salt water, producing a distinctive and lasting gift. Previously, the repurchased float-rope was melted and reformed as cheap plastic pots for plants. Now, the float-rope is beginning to grace the front doors of houses across the country in the form of high-quality, handwoven doormats.

Mr. Bird's creative and novel idea has caught the Nation's attention quickly. His company produces roughly 40 mats each day, and customers from across the Nation purchase over a thousand mats per month! An exceptional product, these vivid doormats were recently acknowledged as the "Best New Product" at this year's New England Products Trade Show in Portland.

Maine's lobster industry, comprised of more than 7,000 owner-operated small businesses, is a pillar of Maine's fishing industry and of our State's economy. Thanks to the forward-looking actions of Mr. Bird, lobstermen can more effectively offset the cost of upgrading to sink-rope, and the old float-rope can be kept out of local landfills. My sincerest thanks to Mr. Bird and everyone at Custom Cordage for their devotion to building forward-thinking small businesses that help our environment, our lobstermen, and our local economy. I wish them all success with this and future endeavors.●

##### COMMENDING MAINE FLOAT-ROPE COMPANY

• Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, today I recognize the contributions of a tremendously innovative small business from my home State of Maine—the Maine Float-Rope Company—that has taken on the mission of helping lobstermen dispose of their old, unusable rope by transforming it into charming gifts.

When Maine lobstermen went to set their traps this spring, they first had to replace the rope they used to connect one lobster trap to another as the result of a new regulation banning the use of traditional floating rope. It requires lobster pots to be linked with sink-rope, the goal being to reduce the risk of entangling whales. Regrettably, Maine's lobstermen face a financial burden as the new sink-rope can cost twice as much as float-rope and is far more expensive to maintain. Additionally, the new regulation threatened to result in hundreds of thousands of pounds of unusable rope clogging local landfills.

Seeking to keep the old rope out of landfills, Penny Johnston, a sales and marketing specialist, established the Waldoboro-based Maine Float-Rope Company in April of this year. Her goal was to ramp up sale of the resourceful doormats that a local company, Custom Cordage, began creating last summer out of retired float-rope. Specifically, her company sells the attractive and durable Down East Doormats that are constructed using the colorful float-rope that is uniquely weathered by seasons of use and exposure to salt water. Previously, the repurchased float-rope was melted and reformed as cheap plastic pots for plants. Now, the float-rope is beginning to grace the front doors of houses across the country in the form of high-quality, handwoven doormats. In fact, since Ms. Johnston's involvement, sales have skyrocketed, with Maine Float-Rope selling over a thousand mats per month!

In addition, Maine Float-Rope donates a percentage of its profits to organizations that support the vitality of lobstermen, the protection of North Atlantic right whales, and a host of groups that advocate for environmentally sound practices. An exceptional product, the vivid Down East Doormat was recently acknowledged as the "Best New Product" at this year's New England Products Trade Show in Portland.

Ms. Johnston, who calls herself a "green entrepreneur," has a successful record of starting businesses based on creative uses of old and recycled material. Prior to founding the Maine Float-Rope Company, Ms. Johnston started The Maine Barn Furniture Company, which took wood from old, dilapidated barns and used it to make handsome tables. She also started Historic Hardscapes, a unique business that reclaims and reuses old hand-cut granite from abandoned farmlands and quarries across the State. Down East Doormats are one more example of how Ms. Johnston finds innovative ways to turn what others would simply discard into high-quality products.

Maine's lobster industry, comprised of more than 7,000 owner-operated small businesses, is a pillar of Maine's fishing industry and of our State's economy. Thanks to the actions of Ms. Johnston, lobstermen can more effectively offset the cost of upgrading to