

amendment No. 3854 intended to be proposed to S. 3217, an original bill to promote the financial stability of the United States by improving accountability and transparency in the financial system, to end "too big to fail", to protect the American taxpayer by ending bailouts, to protect consumers from abusive financial services practices, and for other purposes.

#### AMENDMENT NO. 3857

At the request of Mr. REED, the names of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) and the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 3857 intended to be proposed to S. 3217, an original bill to promote the financial stability of the United States by improving accountability and transparency in the financial system, to end "too big to fail", to protect the American taxpayer by ending bailouts, to protect consumers from abusive financial services practices, and for other purposes.

#### AMENDMENT NO. 3858

At the request of Mr. REED, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3858 intended to be proposed to S. 3217, an original bill to promote the financial stability of the United States by improving accountability and transparency in the financial system, to end "too big to fail", to protect the American taxpayer by ending bailouts, to protect consumers from abusive financial services practices, and for other purposes.

### STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself and Mr. COBURN):

S. 3323. A bill to improve the management and oversight of Federal contracts, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, today I am introducing the bipartisan Federal Contracting and Oversight Act. Every year millions of taxpayer dollars are awarded to contractors with a history of poor performance and misconduct because our federal contracting oversight regime, though well-intentioned, is broken.

The problems in our contracting oversight regime were first brought to my attention by my constituents in Wisconsin, several of whom are small businesses that have suffered as a result of misconduct by a Federal contractor. In one case, a Federal contractor that has received over \$6 million in Federal contracts failed to pay small businesses in Wisconsin that worked as subcontractors. Several years later, the Army finally barred the contractor from receiving Federal dollars, finding that the contractor had "a documented history of failing to pay subcontractors for services rendered pursuant to government contracts."

We must ensure that these records of poor performance and misconduct are identified before federal contracts are awarded to contractors, not years later after the damage has already been done.

As I studied the issue further, I learned that similar problems were widespread and well documented. The Government Accountability Office has documented numerous instances of suspended and debarred companies continuing to receive federal contracts. In one case, a company that had been debarred for attempting to ship nuclear bomb parts to North Korea continued to receive millions of dollars on an Army contract. In another case, a contractor that had been suspended after one of its employees was found to have sabotaged repairs on an aircraft carrier was awarded three new contracts a month after the incident.

We must act to ensure that these incidents do not repeat themselves. American taxpayer dollars should be spent responsibly and the flaws of our contracting process should never be allowed to affect our security.

Our Federal contracting process is in urgent need of reform and greater oversight. To that end, I am introducing the Federal Contracting and Oversight Act, which is an important step to prevent the continued Federal patronage of private companies unworthy of our taxpayers' hard-earned dollars.

I am encouraged that Senator COBURN has also taken note of the flaws of the Federal contracting process and has joined me in this effort as an original cosponsor. This bill also has the support of experts that closely track our federal contracting process, including the Project on Government Oversight, the Center for American Progress, Taxpayers for Common Sense, and OMB Watch.

This bill will protect the hard-earned dollars of American taxpayers by improving the federal contracting system in three ways:

First, this bill will make the system more transparent.

Sunshine continues to be the best disinfectant; unfortunately, some of the most important data concerning contractor performance and misconduct is shielded from the scrutiny of the full Congress and American people.

This bill will broaden access to the new Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System, FAPIIS, database, which contains a comprehensive picture of the records of Federal contractors including details of criminal, civil, and administrative proceedings, contract defaults, suspension and debarments, and other violations of federal acquisition laws.

Under my bill, every member of Congress will be able to access the database in order to review the records of contractors. This is an important step towards greater transparency in our contracting oversight system. Each member of Congress has an interest in

monitoring how the taxpayer dollars of their constituents are being spent.

Second, this bill will empower our contracting officers by giving them the tools and resources they need to adequately vet companies seeking Federal dollars.

Contracting officers currently make award decisions with only a limited set of information that is insufficient to support an informed decision. These contracting officers often lack the information they need to adequately review a company's contracting history.

This bill helps ensure that these officers have a more comprehensive picture of a company's contracting history before they make an award decision. Under this bill, the information available to them will include information on a broader range of misconduct, such as that occurring over 5 years ago, pertaining to a wider range of contracts or resulting in a more inclusive list of legal proceedings. This bill also requires companies vying for Federal dollars to self-report essential details about their past performance before they can receive a contract award. Together, these provisions will help ensure that those officials entrusted with awarding Federal contract dollars have all the resources they need to make an informed decision.

Third, this bill will strengthen the current oversight regime by fixing loopholes and shortcomings that have undermined its effectiveness. An oversight regime can only be effective if it is used, and used properly. It is unacceptable that taxpayer dollars continue to go to companies that have already been suspended or debarred, just because contracting officers have failed to either record or check their status.

Accordingly, this bill tasks the Comptroller General with producing an annual report on the extent to which companies that have been suspended and debarred continue to receive federal contracts or waivers to receive federal contracts. This is an important step towards ensuring that the problems in our contracting process receive the congressional and public scrutiny they deserve. This bill also requires the Inspectors General of each federal agency involved in the procurement process to conduct an annual audit to ensure that contracting officials are appropriately considering the past performance and misconduct of contractors.

The source of the oversight regime's ineffectiveness also lies in its design, which is in need of both consolidation and modernization.

When contracting officials begin to review a company's contracting history, the information they need is spread across numerous databases. They have to navigate an unorganized array of databases, including: the Excluded Parties List System, Central Contractor Registry, Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System, Federal Assistance Award Data System, Federal Awardee Performance

and Integrity Information System, Federal Business Opportunities Database, Federal Procurement Data System-Next Generation, Past Performance Information Retrieval System, and USAspending.gov, among others.

We must integrate these databases to ensure that contracting officials have a one-stop source for relevant contracting information. I am pleased that the General Services Administration has taken some positive steps in this direction, but any consolidation must be comprehensive. Accordingly, this bill requires the Office of Management and Budget to develop and submit a plan to integrate and consolidate the nine most important databases into a single searchable and linked network.

Another reason why suspended and debarred companies continue to receive federal contracts in error is because the unique identification system used to track companies is ineffective and in need of modernization. The Government Accountability Office has documented that the current identification system fails to adequately track subsidiaries, spin-offs, shell companies, and other related entities. This weak tracking system permits some suspended and debarred companies to access federal dollars to which they are not legally entitled.

To that end, this bill requires the Inspector General of the General Services Administration to determine whether the existing system of identifying numbers for contractors is adequately tracking Federal contractors, and develop a plan for developing and adopting a new and more robust identification system.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill. The American people entrust us with their hard-earned tax dollars, and we have a responsibility to ensure that their money is being spent appropriately.

By Mr. BEGICH (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY):

S. 3325. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the waiver of the collection of copayments for telehealth and telemedicine visits of veterans, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, today I rise to introduce legislation to amend title 38, related to this Nation's obligation to provide benefits to our veterans. Specifically, the bill I introduce today with my distinguished colleague, Senator GRASSLEY of Iowa will waive collection of copayments for telehealth and telemedicine visits for veterans.

More than 42,000 veterans are receiving care in their homes, enrolled in the Veterans Health Administration, VHA, Telemedicine program as one form of treatment. In Alaska, as of March 2010, there were 226 veterans receiving this service. Just over 100 of those live in rural Alaska.

Home Telehealth programs provide needed care for the 2-3 percent of veterans who account for 30 percent or

more of agency resources. These men and women are frequent clinic attendees and often require urgent hospital admissions. VHA programs have demonstrated reduced hospital admissions and clinic and emergency room visits, and contribute to an improved quality of life for our veterans.

For no group of veterans is this service more important than for those who live in rural and remote Alaska. Telemedicine has become an increasingly integral component in addressing the needs of veterans residing in rural and remote areas, and is critical to ensuring they have proper access to health care, especially in rural areas.

While the VHA is saving taxpayers money by using telemedicine, currently all telemedicine visits require veterans receiving these treatments to make copayments. My legislation would implement a simple fix. It would waive the required copayments—sometimes up to \$50.00 per visit—to lessen the burden on our veterans, who have sacrificed in service to our great Nation. I believe that waiving these fees may encourage more veterans to take advantage of VHA's telehealth programs, which can be a godsend for rural veterans with few other viable options.

For rural veterans in Alaska, who have to travel by small float planes or boats or even snow machines to get to the nearest clinic for monitoring of their diabetes, high blood pressure, or other chronic conditions, Congress can go a long way in repaying this Nation's debt to our veterans by passing this legislation.

The VHA plans to expand Home Telehealth for weight management, substance abuse, mild traumatic brain injury, dementia, and palliative care, as well as enabling veterans to use mobile devices to access care. I would hate to see these vital services go unused by veterans living in remote Alaskan villages because of the cost of copayments. But, this is not primarily about saving veterans money. This is about the Federal Government doing what is good for our veterans. The monetary benefits for veterans are a plus.

Basically, this legislation will amend title 38 to authorize the waiver of the collection of copayments for telehealth and telemedicine visits of veterans by giving the Secretary the authority to do so.

In closing, I must say it is an honor for me to serve as a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. I feel very privileged to be involved with policy formation that helps our veterans, and indeed to be at the same table as the distinguished chairman of the committee, a veteran of World War II himself, Senator DANIEL AKAKA, who throughout his service in Congress has been a true advocate for our veterans. I appreciate the guidance he has provided me, and the assistance his staff has provided mine in preparation of this legislation.

This is a bipartisan bill to address an issue with no partisan connection. I

strongly encourage my colleagues to join Senator GRASSLEY and me in co-sponsoring this legislation, and I urge expeditious consideration of the legislation to address a growing need for our rural veterans.

#### AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 3860. Mr. CARPER (for himself, Mr. ENSIGN, Mr. GREGG, and Mr. JOHANNES) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3739 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mrs. LINCOLN)) to the bill S. 3217, to promote the financial stability of the United States by improving accountability and transparency in the financial system, to end "too big to fail", to protect the American taxpayer by ending bailouts, to protect consumers from abusive financial services practices, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3861. Mr. CARPER (for himself, Mr. ENSIGN, Mr. GREGG, Mr. CORKER, and Mr. JOHANNES) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3739 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mrs. LINCOLN)) to the bill S. 3217, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3862. Ms. COLLINS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 3217, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3863. Ms. COLLINS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3739 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mrs. LINCOLN)) to the bill S. 3217, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3864. Ms. COLLINS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3739 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mrs. LINCOLN)) to the bill S. 3217, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3865. Mr. GREGG (for himself and Mr. JOHANNES) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3739 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mrs. LINCOLN)) to the bill S. 3217, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3866. Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 3217, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3867. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3739 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mrs. LINCOLN)) to the bill S. 3217, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3868. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3739 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mrs. LINCOLN)) to the bill S. 3217, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3869. Mr. ENSIGN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3787 submitted by Mr. BROWN of Ohio (for himself and Mr. KAUFMAN) and intended to be proposed to the amendment SA 3739 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mrs. LINCOLN)) to the bill S. 3217, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3870. Mr. KERRY (for himself, Mr. BROWN of Massachusetts, and Mr. BROWNBACK) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 3739 proposed by Mr. REID (for Mr. DODD (for himself and Mrs. LINCOLN)) to the bill S. 3217, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3871. Mr. CARDIN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment