

INTRODUCTION OF THE MILITARY
RETIREE HEALTH FAIRNESS ACT
1998

HON. HENRY BONILLA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 1998

Mr. BONILLA. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing along with my colleague from Washington State, Mr. Dicks the "Military Retiree Health Fairness Act of 1998". This bipartisan bill is an important step in keeping our promises to military retirees. Specifically, this legislation will make sure that all military retirees have the opportunity to participate in Tricare Senior Prime, by waiving penalties for late enrollment in Medicare Part B. Without such relief those most dependant on the military medical system may well see their access reduced.

Medicare Subvention will allow military retirees to receive the health care they were promised by having Medicare reimburse DOD for care provided to Medicare eligible beneficiaries at DOD facilities. Retirees will be able to continue using the same physicians they have always relied and depended upon. Current law mandates that retirees who had counted on using the military health care system and did not enroll in Medicare Part B will be denied the opportunity to participate. Without change, these individuals would have reduced access to DOD health services due to Tricare Senior Prime participants increased use of the system.

The "Military Retiree Health Fairness Act of 1998" makes sure all military retirees have the opportunity to participate in Tricare Senior Prime. The "Military Retiree Health Fairness Act of 1998" waives the penalties for those who do not have Medicare Part B, but would like to participate in Tricare Senior Prime. We can not allow our military retirees to be neglected. I urge my colleagues to join me and cosponsor this worthy legislation.

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 4149 "THE
FOREST SERVICE COST REDUC-
TION AND FISCAL ACCOUNTABIL-
ITY ACT OF 1998"

HON. ROBERT SMITH

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 1998

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, a year-and-a-half ago the Committee on Agriculture convened a hearing in Sunriver, Oregon to discuss deteriorating conditions in the Eastside forests of Oregon. That meeting marked the beginning of what has since become an intensive national inquiry into the way the Forest Service is managing our National Forest System.

Since the meeting in Sunriver, the Committee on Agriculture has held ten hearings to examine the performance of the Forest Service. From the first six of these the Committee learned that forest health and productivity throughout the country is deteriorating due to a decline in active forest management—management that is necessary to provide high quality recreation experiences, maintain a well-functioning rural transportation system,

sustain the integrity of watersheds, improve fish and wildlife habitat, protect timber stands from the devastating effects of unnatural fire, insect and disease activity, and provide an adequate supply of forest products to the American public. Recreationists, wildlife advocacy groups, environmentalists and forest products companies from every quarter have testified that the agency is achieving fewer outputs per dollar spend now than in any other time in its history.

This information has prompted the Committee to take a more detailed look at how the Forest Service manages its annual appropriations, trust funds and off-budget accounts to determine the correlation between fiscal management and resource management. This inquiry has revealed some rather troubling findings, including the following:

In 1995, the USDA Inspector General gave the Forest Service a failing grade on its annual financial report saying that it could not certify that the data contained in the report was accurate. The Forest Service has failed to produce an acceptable financial statement since then.

A total of at least 10 separate General Accounting Office reports have been published in recent years documenting the mismanagement of taxpayer dollars by the Forest Service.

The Forest Service claims to have a \$10.5 billion road reconstruction backlog. Yet, thirty-two percent of the agency's road construction and reconstruction program costs are overhead. The FY99 budget request asked for \$26.5 million for road reconstruction while requesting \$31 million for overhead.

The Forest Service presently charges over 27% overhead to the off-budget accounts it uses for reforestation, brush disposal, and other site restoration associated with federal timber sales. Overhead charged to these funds has increased by 80% over the last five years.

Presently 31% of the total costs of the federal timber sale program is overhead. These costs are in addition to the cost of project planning and implementation, environmental documentation, litigation, and other costs. By way of comparison, in 1996 the Forest Service reports that it spent \$5 million on timber sales litigation, \$54 million on environmental documentation, \$123 million on timber sales preparation and over \$200 million on overhead.

The Forest Service does not currently have a system in place to adequately track the costs associated with the programs it administers. Consequently, inefficiency and escalating overhead is the rule within the agency rather than the exception.

Inevitably, each dollar spent on overhead or lost to inefficiency is a dollar not spent on active forest management. In short, rather than spending more money to deliver quality goods and services to the American taxpayer, the Forest Service is spending more money to support wasteful management and line the pockets of bureaucrats.

Some in Congress argue incorrectly that the solution to the problems I have outlined is to simply eliminate those programs the agency does not efficiently administer. This is the position, for example, of those who advocate eliminating the federal timber program.

This approach, however, ignores rather than solves the problem and is ultimately unfair to national forest constituents. If Congress were

to eliminate every Forest Service program plagued by waste and inefficiency then, in the end, we would be forced to eliminate all of them. The big losers under this way of thinking are the millions of tax paying Americans who use our forests for a variety of purposes every day.

When government misbehaves, Congress' objective should be to discipline the government, not punish the people it is supposed to serve. That is why I have introduced the Forest Service Cost Reduction and Fiscal Accountability Act of 1998.

This legislation will require the agency to reduce costs, limit overhead, and be more accountable to Congress and the taxpayer. Specifically, the bill will do five things:

1. Require the Forest Service to account annually for the costs associated with all of the programs it administers by moving to an "all resources" financial reporting system.

2. Impose limitations on the overhead the agency may charge to off-budget funds.

3. Require the Forest Service to fully disclose in each year's budget request the amount of overhead implicit in each budget line item.

4. Require the Forest Service, in cooperation with the General Accounting Office and USDA Office of Inspector General, to develop a five-year strategic plan for identifying and reducing overhead and unnecessary costs.

5. Require periodic GAO audits of the implementation of the strategic plan and corresponding reports to Congress.

I invite my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in quickly moving this bill toward final passage on the House floor.

The Forest Service Cost Reduction and Fiscal Accountability Act of 1998 will produce less waste, greater efficiency, and make more dollars available for active on-the-ground management. It is a good government solution for what ails the Forest Service without unfairly penalizing forest constituents. In sum, it is a win for the good forest management, a win for the Forest Service and, most importantly, a win for the millions of Americans who live, work and recreate in our national forests every day.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MINORITY
COMMUNITY TOBACCO REDUC-
TION ACT

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 1998

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. Speaker, today more than fifty Members of the Congressional Asian Pacific Caucus, Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Native American Caucus joined with a number of other Members of Congress in introducing legislation to address the disproportionate levels of tobacco use and tobacco related disease in the minority community.

The "Minority Community Tobacco Reduction Act" was developed to address the absence of minority initiatives in national tobacco legislation and to reverse the disturbing effects of the tobacco industry's targeting of minorities. The three main priorities of the bill are: 1. Funding for tobacco-related prevention activities in the minority community; 2. Research on

tobacco's effects on minority populations and the best means to reduce tobacco use in the future; and 3. Transition assistance for small, community-based events and activities which can no longer be sponsored by the tobacco industry.

Without these provisions, guaranteeing reductions in youth smoking among all sectors of the American population will be impossible. Moreover, many of the bills introduced in Congress mandate a substantial increase in tobacco prices that will result in a regressive tax increase on low-income minorities if national tobacco legislation does not include efforts to reduce tobacco use among both minority youth and adult smokers.

The Minority Community Tobacco Reduction Act will ensure that new cessation, prevention, research, or education programs, administered by federal agencies or state health departments (which will be funded through federal block grants), are supported in the minority community based on the minority group's percentage of the smoking population. In addition to funding these initiatives at an adequate level, the legislation assures this historic opportunity to prevent tobacco from further harming the minority community is not squandered. By providing the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Minority Health with a role in coordinating the minority tobacco activities of the Public Health Service and approving state applications for block grant funds, a sufficient degree of accountability and organization will be established to produce genuine results.

The minority caucuses' legislation also makes \$1 billion of the funds made available by national tobacco legislation for conducting badly needed biomedical, child health, and tobacco-related research at minority education institutions across the nation. Finally, the Minority Community Tobacco Reduction Act funds treatment of tobacco-related diseases at community health centers and provides transition assistance to small, community-based events, activities and publications sponsored by the tobacco industry in the past but may no longer receive advertising dollars as a result of bans included in national tobacco legislation.

Despite last week's defeat of tobacco legislation introduced by Senator JOHN MCCAIN, it is imperative that Congress continue to work toward enacting comprehensive national tobacco legislation that President Clinton will be willing to sign. The bill introduced by members of the minority caucuses today offers substantial policy initiatives that any genuinely comprehensive national tobacco legislation must include.

Minority populations have suffered from disproportionately higher rates of tobacco use and tobacco-related diseases as a direct result of the tobacco industry's targeting. The Surgeon General's report released last month entitled "Tobacco Use Among U.S. Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups" found that Native Americans and African Americans have the highest smoking rates of any ethnic group. Hispanic youth have smoking rates which have almost overtaken those of white youth, and many Asian American/Pacific Islander sub-populations display frighteningly high rates of tobacco use. Minority populations also consistently display the highest rates of tobacco-related diseases, particularly lung cancer.

According to a report recently released by the Centers for Disease Control, these trends of tobacco use in the minority community are

likely to worsen. The report found that smoking rates among African American and Hispanic high school students increased by 80 percent and 34 percent, respectively, from 1991 through 1997.

While the legislation introduced today by the members of the minority caucuses is a stand-alone bill, its provisions are designed to be included in more comprehensive national tobacco legislation.

The Members of Congress who support the Minority Community Tobacco Reduction Act look forward to working with the Republican and Democratic leadership as well as President Clinton to enact national tobacco legislation this year that will take positive steps toward fighting tobacco use in every American household.

The Minority Community Tobacco Reduction Act is the culmination of almost a year of historic cooperation between the minority caucuses. I am proud of the final product, and would like to thank the dozens if not hundreds of people who have participated in its development. In particular, I would like to thank the following congressional staffers who have spent countless hours working on this bill: Adam Gluck, Alysia Davis, Angela Vincent, Ann Jacobs, Bobby Vassar, Brenda Pillors, Charles Dujon, Charles Stephenson, Claudia Pharis, Curt Clinton, Danny Cromer, Darlene Taylor, David Sutphen, David Wildes, Deborah Spielberg, Edward Jackson, Esther Aguilera, Emilie Milne, Fred Turner, Fredette West, Howard Moon, James Williams, Jennifer Leach, Jessica Diaz, John Schelble, Jon Alexander, Joyce Brayboy, Heather Hale, Kate Emanuel, Keith Stern, Ken Keck, Kenya Reid, Kerry McKenney, Kim Alton, Kim Richan, Kimberly McAfee, Kimberly Teehee, Kirra Jarratt, LaTario Powell, Larry Dillard, Leah Allen, Liz Powell, Lucy Hand, Marcus Mason, Marie McGlone, Marsha McCraven, Minnie Langham, Oneki Dafe, Paul Cunningham, Richard Boykin, Ronnie Simmons, Rory Verrett, Samara Ryder, Sean Peterson, Sheila Harvey, Sherry Newton, Susan Rosenblum, Tammy Boyd, Tambi McCollum, Terri Schroeder, Todd Gee, Tom McDaniels, Tony Vance, Ufo Eric-Atuany, Walter Vinson, and Yelberton Watkins.

I would also like to thank Peter Goodloe from the House Legislative Counsel's office for his assistance in drafting our seemingly endless modifications. Without his expertise, this legislation would never have been prepared in time for introduction today.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DIANA DeGETTE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 1998

Ms. DEGETTE. Mr. Speaker, on June 24, I inadvertently voted "no" on roll call 261. It was my intention to vote "yes".

INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS

HON. HENRY J. HYDE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 25, 1998

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, one of the nation's experts on education, D.L. Cuddy has written an important article I would like to bring to my colleagues' attention.

THE NEW TRANSATLANTIC AGENDA

(By D.L. Cuddy)

In the U.S. Congress, Rep. Henry Hyde has been warning people about school-to-work (STW) education initiatives, and Senator John Ashcroft has amended the Workforce Investment Partnership Act now being discussed to prohibit its funding of STW. At the state level, N.C. Rep. Don Davis is chairing a House Select Committee for Federal Education Grants, which has been investigating STW grants among others, and invited Richmond Times-Dispatch op-ed editor Robert Holland to address the Select Committee on this subject.

While the implications of STW at the state and national levels have been widely debated, not much has been written about the international connections. On May 18, the White House released a statement at the conclusion of the U.S.-European Summit in London, indicating that "through the New Transatlantic Agenda (NTA), created in 1995, the United States and the European Union have focused on addressing the challenges and opportunities of global integration."

One part of this "global integration" in 1995 was the agreement between the U.S. and the European Community establishing a co-operation program in higher education and vocational education and training. The agreement, signed December 21 of that year, called for "improving the quality of human resource development . . . Transatlantic student mobility, . . . and thus portability of academic credits." In this regard, a Joint Committee would reach decisions by consensus.

As part of the NTA, the U.S. and European Union then convened a major conference, "Bridging the Atlantic: People-to-People Links," on May 5-6, 1997 calling for "thematic networks for curriculum development," and further stating that in an information-based global economy, "governments too are obliged to adapt their economic, training and social welfare programs." The conference final report noted that in the U.S., ACHIEVE has been one of the organizations at the forefront of defining key issues in this regard and developing strategies to address them. ACHIEVE has been measuring and reporting each state's annual progress in establishing Internationally competitive standards, and business leaders involved have indicated their commitment to consider the quality of each state's standards when making business location or expansion decisions.

The "Partners in a Global Economy Working Group" of the conference discussed "what redesigning of curricula is required . . . (i.e. what career skills are needed), . . . portability of skill certificates, . . . and institutionalizing cross-national learning/training activities."

Most people debating STW in the U.S. are familiar with the role of Marc Tucker, president of the National Center on Education and the Economy. He's also on the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB), and on its website under international links, one finds "Smartcards Project Forum," under which