

no time to spare to consider the effort and good will invested by the people of Klamath Falls in the Pelican Butte proposal. The fact is that this Administration doesn't care how many rural communities are left in the dust by this regulatory juggernaut.

Mr. President, all of this is very discouraging for Oregonians who have a sense this Administration has already made up its mind on this roadless initiative. It is my understanding that many of my constituents have just received copies of this draft EIS in the last few days—with half of the brief comment period already expired. Nevertheless, from the floor of the Senate today, I am pleading with my constituents to get out there during this comment period and make their voices heard. This rulemaking is too significant for Oregonians to be silent.

Mr. President, I agree with this Administration that we need a long-term resolution to the management of our roadless areas. But common sense tells us that what is needed and appropriate for one area may not be sound stewardship for another. With this roadless initiative, this Administration is talking about setting aside in one broad stroke millions of acres that are supposed to be held in trust for all Americans. Even worse, this plan is being rushed through a truncated public comment process in order to accommodate an artificial political deadline. This isn't the way to manage our precious natural resources and this isn't the way to treat our rural communities. The management of these roadless areas is a complicated question, and it deserves more than the simple answer being force-fed to us by this Administration.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS UNDER MEDICARE

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to discuss an issue that has become increasingly important to many in Congress. As an early sponsor of legislation to provide prescription drug coverage under Medicare, I am pleased there has been progress in reaching an agreement among many proposals to provide prescription drug benefits to seniors.

Medicare recently celebrated its 35th anniversary. As with most things in life this program is now starting to show its age. Still being administered under a model developed in 1965, Medicare is quickly becoming antiquated and blind to the many advances in modern medicine. We all know prescription drugs play an increasingly important role in the health of our nation.

There are countless examples of drugs which now allow us to live longer, more productive lives. Drugs to control blood pressure, lower cholesterol, or mitigate the effects of a stroke are a few which demonstrate the measurable impact research and development can have on improving our lives. Unfortunately, the Medicare pro-

gram has not progressed as rapidly as medicine.

To that end, I introduced the Medicare Ensuring Prescription Drugs for Seniors Act, or MEDS. My bill was an early attempt to heighten the debate surrounding prescription drugs, and at the same time provide a plan that would address the needs of the nearly one third of senior citizens in this country who currently lack any form of prescription coverage. We have all heard the frightening stories of the choices that many seniors are forced to make when it comes to paying for prescription drugs. Unfortunately, many of these stories have been politicized and used to stir the political cauldron over the past several months. But the reality is that decisions between food, shelter, and medicine are all too common among our neediest seniors. MEDS was introduced to help these people.

My plan would add a prescription benefit under the already existing Part B of Medicare, without creating or adding any new overly bureaucratic component to the Medicare program. It works like this: The part B beneficiary would have the opportunity to access the benefit as long as they were Medicare eligible. Those with incomes below 135 percent of the nation's poverty level would be provided the benefit without a deductible and would only be responsible for a 25 percent co-payment for all approved medications.

My bill also provides relief for seniors above the 135 percent income threshold who may face overwhelming drug costs because of the number of prescriptions they take or the relative costs of them, by paying for 75 percent of the costs after a \$150 monthly deductible is met. Most importantly, this voluntary benefit does not have a treatment cap. Unlike both the President's plan and others currently being debated in Congress, MEDS covers all participating beneficiaries no matter what level of monthly or annual drug expenditure they incur and does not abandon seniors when they need help the most.

The House of Representatives narrowly passed a prescription drug bill that subsidizes the insurance industry and attempts to ensure coverage in all areas of the country—a difficult if not impossible task. The biggest problem with this approach is that the insurance industry has stated that it wouldn't be able or willing to provide these types of "stand alone" policies no matter how much of a subsidy they receive. Trying to establish an enormously expensive and administratively difficult plan built on the mere hope that the insurance industry will change its mind, is simply too big a risk to take when it comes to our nations seniors.

The House bill would establish a new outside agency through the Department of Health and Human Services to administer the plan. Not only will this compound the problem of administra-

tion, implementation and increasing federal bureaucracy, but it also actually delays benefits that will help our seniors today. There is no way a major new bureaucracy can be created and become effective in time to provide the help our seniors need now. At a minimum, based on similar initiatives in the past, it would take two years to gear up this kind of new government agency, which again, only duplicates existing federal bureaucracy and slows progress toward meaningful reform.

It's important these facts are understood as we continue discussing emerging plans for a prescription drug benefit under Medicare. How a plan is structured could have dramatic consequences for future innovations in treatments which can enhance quality of life and in some cases save lives. If done right, we'll enable all senior citizens to access the best health care system in the world and receive the latest technology and treatment for their conditions—and do it in a way that is both responsible and expedient. MEDS accomplishes both of these goals.

In closing Mr. President, let me say, as I have in the past, the challenge before us today is to enable Medicare to shape and adapt itself to reflect the realities of an ever changing health care system. After 35 years of endless tinkering, we have a real opportunity to make it more responsive, more helpful, and more attuned to the needs of current and future retirees and disabled persons in this country through the provision of a prescription drug benefit. This is a goal to which I am wholly committed.

NEOTROPICAL MIGRATORY BIRD ACT

Mr. L. CHAFEE. Mr. President, yesterday, the Senate approved S. 148, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. I would like to thank Senator ABRAHAM and Senator SMITH for their work on this important environmental issue, and also offer my family's appreciation for Senator ABRAHAM's kind words regarding my father. Senator John Chafee was a strong proponent of this legislation, and I am proud to follow his lead in cosponsoring this bill.

Now, what is a neotropical migratory bird? Simply put, it's a bird that breeds in North America, and migrates each year to tropical habitats in Central and South America. While the name sounds technical and complicated, many of these birds are well-known and well-loved by Americans. Plovers, sandpipers, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, orioles, blackbirds, and many species of raptor and songbird are all neotropical migratory birds. Some of these birds, such as the Ruby-throated Hummingbird and the Killdeer, cover amazing distances as they travel between their summer and winter habitats.

In Rhode Island, we are fortunate to be visited by many neotropical migrants including one species of hummingbird, over ten species of raptor,

over 30 species of shorebirds, eight species of flycatcher, six species of thrush, and 35 species of warblers. Rhode Island's location makes it a key stopover spot for many neotropical migrants to refuel and rehydrate.

In addition to an excellent location, Rhode Island has important habitat for migratory birds. Its combination of fruit-bearing shrubs and forest provide ample cover and food for these birds to take a break during their migration. The many wetlands found in the state also provide excellent areas to rehydrate, one of the most important needs on a bird's trip north or south.

Even with high quality habitat still available in parts of the United States, tragically, many of these species are in real danger. The greatest human threat to neotropical migratory birds is the loss of habitat, particularly in the Caribbean and Latin America. Many neotropical migratory birds stop to rest and feed at several relatively small patches of habitat along their long migrations between continents. Destruction of these stopover areas can have a devastating impact on a species. In addition, overharvesting of timber, loss of wetlands and heavy use of pesticides exact a heavy toll on the habitats on which neotropical migrants depend. As noted in the Committee Report, 90 species of migratory birds are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, and approximately 210 species in the United States are in serious decline.

The challenge of protecting migratory birds is complicated by the reality that many of the most effective conservation measures must be implemented overseas. Migratory birds cross oceans, time zones, and national boundaries. Preservation of these species must involve close partnerships and cooperation with our Caribbean and South American neighbors.

Senator ABRAHAM's bill will help address the multitude of threats facing migratory birds by encouraging partnerships between private and public entities and across international boundaries to help protect and restore habitat of neotropical migrants. Importantly, there are ongoing efforts aimed at stopping the decline in migratory bird species; however, these efforts could be enhanced through better coordination and increased funding. S. 148 furthers both goals. Under the bill, the Secretary of the Interior is directed to facilitate the exchange of information among the various groups, and to coordinate existing conservation efforts. The bill also authorizes \$25 million over five years in grants for projects to conserve neotropical migratory bird populations. Three-quarters of this funding must be used for projects in other countries to ensure that scarce resources will be focused where they are needed most.

In closing, I would like to relate a story that my father used to tell about a family friend traveling in China. This fellow noticed that his surroundings

there were strangely silent. Upon reflection, he attributed the ominous quiet to the total lack of birds in the environment. Apparently, in parts of China the destruction of habitat and the commercial bird market have resulted in the virtual elimination of songbirds. What a terrible loss. We must work together to prevent such tragedy from occurring in the Western Hemisphere. And, Senator ABRAHAM's bill is a good step in the right direction. I applaud my colleagues for supporting this measure to help prevent the further decline in our neotropical migratory birds. And, I hope the President will act swiftly to enact the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Thursday, June 29, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,645,427,846,938.37 (Five trillion, six hundred forty-five billion, four hundred twenty-seven million, eight hundred forty-six thousand, nine hundred thirty-eight dollars and thirty-seven cents).

One year ago, June 29, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,640,577,000,000 (Five trillion, six hundred forty billion, five hundred seventy-seven million).

Fifteen years ago, June 29, 1985, the Federal debt stood at \$1,798,529,000,000 (One trillion, seven hundred ninety-eight billion, five hundred twenty-nine million).

Twenty-five years ago, June 29, 1975, the Federal debt stood at \$536,081,000,000 (Five hundred thirty-six billion, eighty-one million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,109,346,846,938.37 (Five trillion, one hundred nine billion, three hundred forty-six thousand, nine hundred thirty-eight dollars and thirty-seven cents) during the past 25 years.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRINIDAD STATE JUNIOR COLLEGE

• Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, Trinidad State Junior College, the oldest two-year college in Colorado, is celebrating 75 years of excellence. Established in 1925 by the Colorado Legislature, the College can look back with pride over its 75 years of service to its community, the State of Colorado, and the Nation.

Throughout its history, Trinidad State Junior College has attracted students from across Colorado, from many areas of the United States, and from numerous foreign countries. The result has been the creation of an environment that is significantly more cosmopolitan than is found in other rural two-year colleges.

Trinidad State Junior College will carry forth its strong tradition of scho-

lastic excellence into the new century and will continue to provide its students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to meet their educational and personal goals.

Congratulations to Trinidad State Junior College on its seventy-fifth anniversary.●

OCCASION OF THE 2000 PARALYMPIC TRIALS

• Mr. DODD. Mr. President, this past week, culminating on Saturday, June 24th, the 2000 Paralympic Trials for track and field were held on the campus of Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut.

Almost 150 athletes competed in a dozen events including the 100 meter race, 10,000 meter race, shot put, long jump and high jump. Seventy-one athletes earned the right to represent the United States at the 2000 Sydney Paralympic Games, which will be held October 18th-29th.

The Paralympic movement is relatively young, but in recent years it has grown rapidly. In 1948, Sir Ludwig Guttmann staged the first International Wheelchair Games to coincide with the 1948 London Olympic Games. These first Games focused on World War II veterans with spinal cord-related injuries. Later, other disability groups established international sports organizations which arranged various competitions. As time went by, multi-disability competitions developed. These events were brought together for the first time under the banner of the Paralympic Games in 1960 in Rome.

Since then, the games have grown in success and popularity. Always held in tandem with the Olympic Games, the Paralympic athletes move into the Olympic village shortly after the Olympic athletes move out and many times compete at the same venues as their Olympic counterparts.

From Seoul to Barcelona and most recently in Atlanta, the Paralympic Games have blossomed into a major international sporting event. This year's Games in Sydney will continue the momentum generated over the last decade. In fact, more athletes will compete at the Sydney 2000 Summer Paralympics (4,000 athletes from 125 nations) than in the 1972 Munich Olympics.

To those who competed last week in Connecticut, I think I speak for all of our colleagues in applauding their efforts. Like all athletes, they remind us of the timely and timeless virtues that sports teach us—virtues like self-reliance, discipline, cooperation, and modesty in victory as well as defeat. In striving to do their best, they inspire others to do their best, as well—be they disabled or not.

To those who will represent the United States in Sydney, we wish them luck. And we are confident that they will do our nation proud.

I ask that the names of these athletes be printed in the RECORD.