

JOURNAL ARTICLE PRAISES VA HEALTH CARE—SECRETARY NICHOLSON: FURTHER PROOF OF VA'S TOP QUALITY CARE

WASHINGTON.—“One of the most striking examples of American health care success”—that is one medical journal’s recent assessment of the health care system operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The most recent tribute to VA’s health care system came in an article in the medical journal *Neurology*.

“The quality of VA’s health care system is recognized by medical professionals and, most importantly, by veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. “Repeatedly, the medical community holds up VA’s health care system as a model.”

“The VA has achieved remarkable improvements in patient care and health outcomes, and is a cost-effective and efficient organization,” according to the journal. For example, the article cited VA’s comprehensive coverage and said it is especially suited to manage chronic disease.

Dr. Michael J. Kussman, VA’s Acting Under Secretary for Health, said the article underscores the Department’s commitment to high quality patient care.

“This shows that VA’s health system is recognized internationally as the benchmark for health care services,” Dr. Kussman said. “It further demonstrates that our commitment to high quality care is benefiting the men and women who have earned the best possible care through service to our country.”

The *Neurology* article is the second recent study citing the quality of VA health care. In December, a comprehensive study by Harvard Medical School said federal and military hospitals, such as those run by the VA, provide the best care available anywhere for some of the most common life-threatening illnesses.

In 2006, VA received the prestigious “Innovations in American Government” Award from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government for its advanced electronic health records and performance measurement system.

Mr. AKAKA. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator, my friend from Hawaii, for his excellent presentation. I pay tribute to him for his extraordinary work on behalf of the veterans of this country. He has been the real leader in the Senate on this issue, particularly for those who have suffered the wounds of war. He has been a tireless advocate to make sure we get the very best focus and attention to them. We have listened to him frequently. I hope the Senate will pay close attention to his words and his findings and his urging for this body.

I thank him for his comments, as always.

AMENDMENT NO. 71 TO S. 1

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, as I have mentioned before, last year Washington was rocked by the Abramoff scandal and other misdeeds. I am pleased that Congress has shown it is taking seriously its responsibility to the American people by revisiting and tightening the rules and laws that govern Members of the Senate. Many have said that S.1, which overwhelmingly

passed out of the Senate last week, includes the most sweeping ethics reform measures since Watergate.

There is one point that I discussed and pushed forward during last year’s debate that I believe needs to again be part of what we are doing now. Last year I offered a sense-of-the-Senate amendment to make many of the reforms we have considered throughout this ethics debate apply to all branches of Government. I am pleased that this sense of the Senate was accepted and is included in the underlying bill.

During the debate last week, I filed an amendment, No. 71, which builds upon the principle behind this sense of the Senate—that the standards employed in this bill should be the minimum standards that guide the other branches of Government. I thought this was a good amendment—in fact, a necessary amendment—that ought to be accepted into this bill. Unfortunately, that did not happen. I have spoken with some of my colleagues and understand that though there is general support for the principle that ethics standards in the executive branch should be as stringent as those made applicable by this bill, some of my colleagues believe the provisions of this amendment warrant further evaluation. Though I am disappointed this amendment will not be included on this bill, I respect and appreciate the importance and value of committee evaluation and will look forward to working on this issue as that committee process proceeds.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I would like to thank my friend and colleague from Nebraska for bringing this amendment and important issue forward. The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs has jurisdiction over these issues which impact the executive branch. As chairman of that committee, I can appreciate that this amendment warrants more thorough evaluation and deliberation. Later this year, the committee will consider the reauthorization of the Office of Government Ethics—the executive branch’s ethics arm. I look forward to working with my friend from Nebraska on the issue throughout the year and as we consider this reauthorization and other matters.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. I thank my good friend from Connecticut. I appreciate his thoughtfulness in this debate, and I look forward to discussing it further as his committee proceeds this year.

UNI-CAPITOL WASHINGTON INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, as modern communication makes our world increasingly smaller, linking global societies at unprecedented business, government and social levels, it is critical that America and other democracies worldwide engage in a process of ongoing co-education about the efforts and work of democratic governments. This educational exchange is best facili-

tated by hands-on learning and personal experience. A terrific example of this effort is the Uni-Capitol Washington Internship Programme, in which outstanding college students from seven of Australia’s top universities compete for the opportunity to serve as interns for Members of the U.S. Congress. In its eighth year, the program has facilitated internships for 68 Australian students thus far.

I am fortunate to be able to participate this year. Charis Tierney from Brisbane, Queensland, has been a wonderful addition to my office this winter. She says of this opportunity:

The UCWIP has been a once in a lifetime to not only observe but participate in the work of the U.S. Congress. Working within Senator Crapo’s office has given me the kind of unique appreciation for the United States Senate’s work that can only be gained from behind the scenes. My daily interaction with the fantastic staff of the Senator’s office has only enhanced the experience.

I offer my congratulations to Director Eric Federling and his wife Daphne for their support and dedication of this important educational program. The additional activities such as visits to historic sites, meetings with other government agencies and outside organizations and special events helps enhance the experience for these promising young women and men. The Federlings’ commitment to comprehensive bilateral civic education has made it possible for students like Charis to take their experiences here in the legislative branch of the U.S. Government back to Australia and apply lessons learned as they pursue their own course of study across a wide range of academic pursuits.

This valuable program bridges the 9,000 miles that separate the United States and Australia with the friendship of shared experiences and realization and application of common goals and interests.

RECOGNIZING CONNIE FEUERSTEIN

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today in celebration of my longtime friend and staff member, Connie Feuerstein. After working with me for over a decade, Connie has decided to join her husband, Jack, in retirement.

Long before joining my staff, Connie was active in her church, community, and Genesee County politics. Her efforts were critical in my successful campaign for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1996, and I am so fortunate that she was willing to join my congressional staff.

For Connie, her work has always been so much more than just a job. She brings such passion and energy to everything she does. Whether it is attending a community event, walking in a parade or advocating on behalf of a family or for the needs of her community, Connie always gives 110 percent to whatever she is doing.

As a district representative in my congressional offices in Brighton and