

to be made in Cheyenne—not Washington.

Congress has an obligation to ensure such quality services to the 124 million ERISA enrollees whose plans are currently absent these protections. In doing so, however, the Republican bill stays within its jurisdictional boundaries and doesn't trample over states' rights. As a result, Americans can gain protections whether they are insured under a state, ERISA, or Medicare regulated plan. I believe that this approach is rational and fair.

The Republican Patients' Bill of Rights would provide individual rights with respect to a person's own, personal health information. Access to personal medical records is a delicate matter. Provisions, however, are included to address inspection and copying of a person's medical information. Safeguards and enforcement language has also been added to guarantee confidentiality. In relation to this language, group health plans and health insurance issuers in both the group and individual market would be prohibited from collecting or using predictive genetic information about a patient with the intention of denying health insurance coverage or setting premium rates.

The Republican plan would establish the Agency for Healthcare Quality Research. This is not a new federal agency, but rather a new name for the current Agency for Health Care Policy and Research within the Department of Health and Human Services. This agency would be modernized to improve healthcare quality throughout America. The agency would not mandate a national definition of quality, but it would provide information to patients regarding the quality of care people receive, allow physicians to compare their quality outcomes with their peers, and enable employers and individuals to make prudent purchases based on quality.

The Senate Labor Committee held a number of hearings in relation to women's health research and prevention. As a result, the Republican Patients' Bill of Rights includes a number of important provisions that represent women's health. These provisions will clearly benefit the promotion of basic and clinical research for osteoporosis, breast and ovarian cancer, the effects of aging and other women's health issues.

Finally, the Republican Patients' Bill of Rights broadens access to coverage by removing the 750,000 cap on medical savings accounts (MSA's). MSA's are a success and should be made available to anyone who wishes to control their own healthcare costs. Moreover, persons who pay for their own health insurance could deduct 100 percent of the costs if the Republican plan is enacted. This would have a dramatic impact on folks from Wyoming. These provisions would, without a doubt, pave the way for quality healthcare to millions of Americans without dismantling access and affordability.

While the President's bill has been pitched as being essential to enhancing the quality of care Americans receive, I hope that my colleagues will carefully evaluate the impact that any nationalized, bureaucratized, budget-busting, one-size-fits-all bill would have on our nation's healthcare system. As I have encouraged my constituents to read the fine print, I ask my colleagues to consider how the President's legislation impacts you and your home state. Rural states deserve a voice, too. Only the Republican Patients' Bill of Rights Act would give them that voice.●

HURRICANE GEORGES AND THE DISASTER MITIGATION ACT OF 1998

● GRAHAM. Mr. President, on September 30th, with my colleagues Senator MACK and Florida Governor Lawton Chiles, I participated in a helicopter tour of Florida's Panhandle, where once again, Mother Nature has subjected Florida's citizens to her wrath. After first devastating the Florida Keys, Hurricane Georges moved northward and severely impacted the Panhandle, producing rainfall in excess of 2 feet in some areas.

In the Florida Keys, Georges damaged over 1,500 homes destroying or causing major damage to approximately 640 residences. Initial estimates indicate that Georges caused over \$250 million in insured damage in the Keys, and there are millions more in uninsured damages. Many residents in the lower Keys have only recently had their power restored, and Federal, State, local, and voluntary agencies provided food, water, and ice for more than a week as the Keys finally emerged from this emergency situation.

Unfortunately—as I was able to view firsthand—Georges path of destruction did not end in the Keys. Even in its weakened state, Georges caused extensive flooding and isolated tornadoes throughout the Panhandle. At least 20 major roads were closed or partially closed, and evacuations continued for days in many low-lying areas. During my visit to the area, 14 shelters remained open, providing safe harbor for at least 400 Floridians who had been forced from their homes.

As a result of this hurricane, the President issued an emergency declaration for 33 Florida counties, in order to provide immediate Federal assistance to protect the lives and property of affected residents. On September 28, the President issued a major disaster declaration for Monroe County, which authorizes Federal disaster recovery assistance for local governments and citizens in the Florida Keys. As of today, 16 counties in and around the Panhandle have been added to this declaration, and I want to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of both the President and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in expe-

ditioning Federal assistance to the State of Florida.

Mr. President, throughout 1998, I have come to the Senate floor to describe the destruction and misery that Florida has experienced as a direct result of natural disasters. This year, Florida has been subjected to a series of unprecedented natural disasters. Even for a state that is experienced in dealing with such disasters, Floridians have been tested again and again by what may be one of the worst years in Florida meteorological history. In late January and early February—in the midst of our State's dry season—several Northern Florida counties were deluged by massive floods. Not long after, parts of Central Florida were devastated by thunderstorms and tornadoes that are more typical in the summer months. Beginning in May and ending in late July, a deadly combination of intense heat and prolonged drought sparked more than 2,000 forest fires in Florida's 67 counties. Finally, over the next several weeks, Florida will begin the long and painful process of recovery from the widespread damage that has been caused by Hurricane Georges.

I ask that this September 30 article from the Miami Herald—which summarizes Florida's 6 Presidential disaster declarations in more detail—be printed in the RECORD.

The article follows:

FLORIDA GET FEDERAL AID A RECORD SIX TIMES

(By Tom Fiedler)

For Floridians, this has been a banner year of hell and high water. President Clinton said so.

Even before Hurricane Georges slapped the Keys unsilly, then dumped tons of fresh rain on an already sodden Panhandle, Florida had established in 1998 a new—although dubious—record: recipient of the most presidential disaster declarations in a single year.

"It's been a very hard year," said Joseph Myers, state director of emergency management, who on Tuesday was into his seventh straight day of working around the clock monitoring the latest disaster. "But that's what we get paid to do."

He would be entitled to wonder if that could possibly be pay enough, at least this year.

Like home-run sluggers Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa, Florida established its new record with style, shattering the previous marks by more than a couple.

Since New Year's Day, which Myers spent monitoring a chain of tornadoes ripping their way across the central peninsula, causing at least \$24 million in damage to crops and homes. President Clinton has declared at least parts of Florida to be federal disaster areas six times.

That topped the previous records of three in 1992—the year that included the mother of all disaster declarations. Hurricane Andrew—and 1995, which featured Hurricanes Erin and Opal, both concentrating their fury on the upper Gulf Coast.

To qualify for a presidential disaster declaration, the amount of damage must be beyond the ability of state and local government to assist, either because of the amounts of money involved or the types of assistance needed.

When the president issues a declaration, it makes available federal money to reimburse

the state, and local governments for the immediate costs of meeting the emergency—such as in providing police and fire services, maintaining shelters or in restoring vital services.

It also activates several federal programs to aid in a community's long-term recovery. That array includes unemployment assistance to those whose jobs may have been lost or interrupted because of the disaster; mortgage assistance; low-interest loans to help businesses and farmers get back on their feet; money for governments to rebuild highways or restore other services—including replacing lost tax revenues from damaged businesses; and money that can be used to avert future disasters, such as constructing dikes against floods or beach dunes against hurricanes.

VARIETY OF DISASTERS

What distinguishes 1998 from previous years is the variety of disasters that has befallen the state. Besides hurricanes, which can destroy people and property through high water and wind, this year's declarations have included several for killer tornadoes, one for massive flooding and—most dramatic of all—one for infernal fires that raged for nearly two months over an area that at one point stretched nearly from Tallahassee to Miami.

Missing only were the biblical swarms of locusts and the medieval bubonic plague.

Myers said his personal disaster calendar began last Christmas, when he was summoned to the state's emergency-management headquarters to monitor a winter storm exploding out of the Gulf and hammering counties in Central Florida. The storm—considered the shock troops of El Niño—spun off dozens of tornadoes, washed out hundreds of homes and virtually ruined tomato and strawberry crops that were ripening. Its cost: about \$24 million to taxpayers alone, not counting what insurance companies paid to individuals.

TORNADOES IN MIAMI

Holidays seemed as magnets to these storms. On Groundhog Day, another winter storm rumbled out of the Gulf to cut across the lower peninsula. This one triggered tornadoes in the heart of Miami.

The so-called Groundhog Day storm savaged 600 homes in Dade, Broward and Monroe counties. It left two tugboats parked on Sunny Isles Beach and caused \$2 million in damage to the Keys' lobstering industry.

Barely three weeks later, another storm hammered the central part of the state, coming ashore in the Tampa Bay area but spreading throughout the peninsula. Myers said the president was still in the process of issuing the disaster declaration for the Groundhog Day storm when the bad weather hit.

"So they just added this onto the one they were already working with," he said. "The storm kept on coming, and they kept on adding."

The most dramatic were bands of swarming tornadoes that bracketed Orlando in March, flattening communities near Kissimmee and those east of Sanford. All told, nearly two dozens Floridians were killed in those weather disasters.

MOST OF THE STATE

"Eventually they got to 56 counties," only 11 short of Florida's 67 counties, Myers said. "They finally stopped adding them on April 24."

The lull in El Niño's wind and rain proved anything but benign, however. With such a wet spring, the underbrush in the state's forests grew at an incredible pace, becoming lush and thick.

"Then it just dried up. It didn't rain," Myers said. "We knew that El Niño would

produce fires, but we thought they would come later."

June was the driest month in Florida's history. The underbrush became tinder.

On June 6, the anniversary of D-Day, a major fire flared in Flagler County between Daytona Beach and St. Augustine. It raged for 48 days. President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore were among those who came to inspect the disaster. Fire crews from around the nation came to fight it.

"We ended up getting a major disaster declaration and 15 fire suppression grants to pay for the firefighting," the first time Florida had ever received such compensation, Myers said.

Florida's cost of fighting the fires alone hit \$156 million.

• **Mr. BUMPERS.** Mr. President, my experiences with disasters this year—in addition to the unforgettable destruction of Hurricane Andrew in 1992—have motivated me to re-evaluate the policies and programs that are implemented to ease the pain and economic loss caused by disasters. First, we must recognize that we cannot prevent severe weather events. In fact, it seems that as we approach the millennium, the Nation is experiencing severe weather more frequently—and more intensely—than ever before. Second, as our population grows, our coastal and riverfront communities have greatly expanded, placing an even higher number of citizens at risk from floods and hurricanes. Finally, expanded requirements for housing and residential structures have increased both the number and value of property developments in high-risk areas.

Taken together, these facts clearly demonstrate that we will continue to experience losses from natural disaster. Therefore, we must act now to limit these inevitable losses through a proactive, nationwide loss prevention and mitigation initiative. We cannot continue to respond to repeat disasters in the same locations in an endless cycle of damage-repair-damage-repair.

It is for these reasons, Mr. President, that Senator INHOFE and myself introduced the Disaster Mitigation Act of 1998. Our legislation focuses the energies of Federal, State, and local governments on disaster mitigation, shifting the Nation's efforts toward preventative—rather than responsive—actions, in order to prepare our citizens for disasters now and in the future.

I worked very closely with Senator INHOFE to develop this bipartisan legislation, which has been reported out of the Environment and Public Works Committee. This legislation will more comprehensively and efficiently address the threats we face from disasters of all types. The bill is composed of two titles: Title I seeks to reduce the impact of disasters by authorizing a "pre-disaster mitigation" program; Title II seeks to streamline the current disaster assistance programs to save administrative costs, and to simplify these programs for the benefit of States, local communities, and individual disaster victims.

To address the problems associated with the damage-repair-damage-repair

cycle, the legislation places its primary emphasis on comprehensive pre-disaster mitigation. This bill will authorize a five-year pre-disaster mitigation program, funded at \$35 million per year, to be administered by Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA. The pre-disaster mitigation program will change the focus of our efforts, at all levels of government, to preventative—rather than responsive—actions in planning for disasters. Such a change in ideology is critical to reducing the short- and long-term costs of natural disasters. It will encourage both the public and the private sector, as well as individual citizens, to take responsibility for the threats they face by adopting the concept of disaster mitigation into their everyday lives. Just like energy conservation, recycling, and the widespread use of seat belts, disaster mitigation should become a concept that all citizens incorporate into their day-to-day existence.

Since 1993, under the leadership of Director James Lee Witt, FEMA has truly changed its way of doing business. In the past five years, FEMA has become more responsive to disaster victims and State and local governments, and has "reinvented" itself by choosing to focus its energy on mitigating, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from the effects of natural hazards. FEMA has already taken an important first step in advocating pre-disaster mitigation by establishing "Project Impact," their new mitigation initiative, in local communities throughout the nation. I am proud to say that Deerfield Beach, Florida, was the first community to be chosen as a participant in Project Impact. By authorizing the conduct of Project Impact for five years in this legislation, we will definitively endorse both the program and Director Witt's leadership, and we expect that the initiative will produce measurable results in reducing the costs of disaster in the future.

Mr. President, this legislation is the result of coordination and cooperation with FEMA, the National Association of Emergency Management, the National League of Cities, representatives of the private and voluntary sectors, and numerous other state and local governmental organizations. I strongly believe that this legislation represents a historic change in the nation's efforts to prevent the effects of natural disasters. By taking proactive steps to implement mitigation now, we will reduce the damage, pain, and suffering from disasters in the future that have become all too familiar to us from the disasters we have faced in the recent past.

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to support Senator Inhofe and myself by joining with us in our efforts to protect the citizens of the U.S. from disasters now and in the future. I ask the Senators who have most recently been affected by Hurricane Georges, as well

as the many Senators whose constituents have been impacted by catastrophic disasters over the past several years, to support this legislation and ensure its passage before the end of this session.●

NATIONAL OPTICIANS MONTH

● Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, January 1999 will be celebrated throughout the United States as National Opticians Month. I am pleased to inform my colleagues that one of my constituents, Gary R. Aiken of Minnetonka, Minnesota, is president of the Opticians Association of America, which is sponsoring the observance.

Nearly all Americans aged 65 or older require some help to see their best and sixty percent of Americans wear eyeglasses or contact lenses. Opticians, skilled in fitting and dispensing eyeglasses and contact lenses, provide the expert assistance we need to make the most of our vision. Technology has brought us literally thousands of possible combinations of eyeglass frames and lenses and an array of contact lenses. Dispensing opticians play a pivotal role in guiding eyewear customers to the combination which exactly fits their need.

Through formal education programs, voluntary national certification and mandatory licensing in many states, and programs of continuing education, dispensing opticians acquire the skills and competence to correctly, efficiently and effectively fill eyewear prescriptions. At the same time, retail opticians are an important part of our nation's small business community and provide the competitive balance which keeps eyewear affordable for all Americans.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the important role of dispensing opticians as they assist us all in making the most of our precious eyesight. I commend them for their efforts and congratulate Gary Aiken and the members of the Opticians Association of America for their accomplishments.●

MICHAEL K. SIMPSON

● Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to New York's Dr. Michael K. Simpson who last year completed ten years of service as President of Utica College at Syracuse University and is now President of the American University in Paris.

While at Utica, Dr. Simpson taught international relations, contemporary French politics, international law, the political economics of multinational corporations, macro- and micro-economics, and American foreign policy. He has also been a visiting professor at the Maxwell School of Citizenship at Syracuse University and director of Syracuse's study center in Strasbourg, France.

In addition to his broad academic experience, Dr. Simpson has dedicated himself to the people of Oneida County,

New York. As the community representative and chairperson of the Health and Hospital Council of the Mohawk Valley from 1987-1992, he led that Council toward developing a hospital consolidation plan for four area hospitals. That succeeded in making quality health-care more accessible and affordable to local residents. Since 1988 he has been a trustee of The Savings Bank of Utica.

I have had the privilege to speak at three commencements in which Michael Simpson participated—at his graduation from Fordham College in 1970 when he earned his bachelor's degree, at Syracuse University in 1983 upon receipt of his M.B.A., and during his tenure as Utica College President.

With great admiration and gratitude I commend Dr. Simpson for his commitment to excellence in education and his service to his fellow citizens of New York. I wish him all the best on his sojourn in Paris.●

TAIWAN'S NATIONAL DAY

● Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I want to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to President Lee Teng-hui, Vice President Lien Chan and the people of the Republic of China today, on their National Day.

Taiwan has continued to prosper economically even in the face of the Asian financial crisis. As the world's fourteenth largest economic entity, Taiwan plays a significant role in global trade and Asian economies. With its per capita income of \$13,000 US dollars, Taiwan provides an important market for American consumer goods.

In addition to its economic successes, Taiwan has embarked upon a democratic course resulting in a pluralistic society which enjoys basic democratic rights and freedoms including freedom of the press and direct elections for the president and other officials.

The people of Taiwan and its leadership should be very proud of the successes that they have achieved. I congratulate them on this special day.●

PRIVATE RELIEF BILLS

● Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I am pleased that key members of the Senate have agreed to pass all the pending private relief bills in one package and send it over to the House.

I would like to thank the principals who have been involved in this effort, Senators HATCH, ABRAHAM, LEAHY and KENNEDY. This package will include my bill to help Vova Malofienko.

Let me tell you a little about Vova Malofienko and his family. Vova was born in Chernigov, Ukraine, just 30 miles from the Chernobyl nuclear reactor.

In 1986, when he was just two, the reactor exploded and he was exposed to high levels of radiation. He was diagnosed with leukemia in June 1990, shortly before his sixth birthday.

Through the efforts of the Children of Chernobyl Relief Fund, Vova and his

mother came to the United States with seven other children to attend Paul Newman's "Hole in the Wall" camp in Connecticut.

While in this country, Vova was able to receive extensive cancer treatment and chemotherapy. In November of 1992, his cancer went into remission.

Regrettably, the other children from Chernobyl were not as fortunate. They returned to the Ukraine and they died one by one because of inadequate cancer treatment. Not a child survived.

The air, food, and water in the Ukraine are still contaminated with radiation and are perilous to those like Vova who have a weakened immune system.

Additionally, cancer treatment available in the Ukraine is not as sophisticated as treatment available in the United States.

Although Vova completed his chemotherapy in 1992, he continues to need medical follow-up on a consistent basis, including physical examinations, lab work and radiological examinations to assure early detection and prompt and appropriate therapy in the unfortunate event the leukemia recurs.

Because of his perilous medical condition, Vova and his family have done everything possible to remain in the United States. Since 1992, they have obtained a number of visa extensions, and I have helped them with their efforts.

In March of 1997, the last time the Malofienkos visas were expiring, I appealed to the INS and the family was given what I was told would be final one-year extension.

So we have a family battling for over six years now, to stay in this country. And why? So that they can save the life of their child, Vova.

Because of the compelling circumstances of their case, I introduced S. 1460, which was approved unanimously by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

After I introduced that bill, Senator ABRAHAM, in his capacity as Chairman of the Immigration Subcommittee, requested a report from the INS and that stayed any further INS proceedings.

But at the end of this Congress they would be subject to deportation. That is why I have worked so hard to get this bill passed this session of Congress.

This family has endured enough. They cannot have the threat of deportation hanging over their heads. They are dealing with enough trauma from Vova's cancer.

I wish my colleagues could meet Vova—then they would understand why I feel so strongly about this case. He is truly a remarkable young man.

Throughout his battle against cancer, he has been an inspiration. He has been an honors student at Millburn Middle School, and he is an eloquent spokesperson for children with cancer. He has rallied the community and helped bring out the best in everyone. His dedication, grace, and dignity provide an outstanding example, not just to young people, but to all Americans.