

offered by Representative PETERSON. And I felt so strongly about this issue that in late July I circulated a letter to the FAA conferees, signed by 15 other Senators, expressing strong opposition to having mandatory EAS cost-sharing language in the final legislative package. As such, I was extremely disappointed when that same language found itself into the FAA conference report issued on July 25.

Mr. President, the EAS program is not perfect, and Congress certainly needs to do all we can to keep the costs and subsidy levels associated with the program as low as possible. I look forward to working with members of the Commerce Committee and the Senate on the issue, but I continue to believe that requiring cost-sharing in today's economy and today's aviation environment is clearly a wrong-headed approach.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to address the larger issue of the importance of air service to America's small communities. As we work to address the vital aviation issues facing the country, we cannot forget the challenges that small communities in Maine, and throughout the Nation, face in attracting and retaining air service. I have always believed that adequate, reliable air service in our Nation's rural areas is not simply a luxury or a convenience. It is an imperative. And quite frankly, I have serious concerns about the impact deregulation of the airline industry has had on small- and medium-sized cities in rural areas, like Maine. The fact is, since deregulation, many of these communities in Maine, and elsewhere, have experienced a decrease in flights and size of aircraft while seeing an increase in fares. More than 300 have lost air service altogether.

Many air carriers are experiencing an unprecedented financial crisis, and the first routes on the chopping block will be those to small- and medium-sized communities. This will only increase demand for the two existing Federal forms of assistance, EAS and the Small Community Air Service Grant Program.

In short, when considering this legislation, I believe that we need to do all we can to help small communities maintain their access to the national transportation system during these difficult times. Mandatory EAS cost-sharing would have the opposite effect, and I hope that the conferees strip it out should the bill be recommitted to conference.

MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise to speak in praise of the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who will be canonized as a Roman Catholic saint later this month.

Her life and work were a blessing to everyone, regardless of creed or religion. No one who ever saw her—even on television—will ever forget Mother Te-

resa: the tiny nun with the wrinkled face, beaming smile, and penetrating eyes filled with love and understanding. And no one who learned of her work among the poorest of the poor will ever forget her gentle challenge to us all to do more for our fellow human beings.

Mother Teresa inspired us not only by her good works but by the spirit of love and respect for every individual that permeated her work. As she herself said in accepting the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize, "Love begins at home, and it is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the action that we do." She accepted the prize "in the name of the hungry, the naked, the homeless, of the crippled, of the blind, of the lepers, of all those people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared-for throughout society, people who have become a burden to the society and are shunned by everyone."

In presenting the prize to Mother Teresa, Chairman John Sannes of the Norwegian Nobel Committee noted: "The hallmark of her work has been respect for the individual's worth and dignity. . . . In her eyes the person who, in the accepted sense, is the recipient, is also the giver, and the one who gives most. Giving—giving something of oneself—is what confers real joy, and the person who is allowed to give is the one who receives the most precious gift."

In her final years, Mother Teresa focused her attention and prodigious energy on establishing hospice programs for people with AIDS. "It is a terrible tragedy to have AIDS," she said, "but it is worse to be unloved." Perhaps more than any other person, Mother Teresa changed the way that the world sees AIDS. The broad, bipartisan support for international AIDS programs that has emerged in the United States Congress is largely a result of her work and message of love and compassion.

FAA REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I would like to speak for a few minutes on the pending reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration. A conference report on HR 2115 was filed back in July, and since then there has been no further action in either house of Congress.

As I see it, the problem with the bill is that the conferees on the part of the majority chose to conduct a back-room conference without the participation of the minority. This was a flawed process, and the result is a conference report that can't pass either the House or the Senate. The House is now poised to recommit the bill to the conference. Meanwhile, Congress had to pass a short-term extension of FAA's administration just to keep the agency in operation.

I think by now all Senators are aware of the many concerns that have been raised over the FAA conference report. On a number of key measures, the conferees ignored the will of the

majority in the House and the Senate and arbitrarily inserted provisions that both houses had voted to oppose. I believe adding such extraneous and objectionable provisions is an egregious violation of the conference process. All Senators should be offended by what the conferees did in this case.

Senator REID spoke Tuesday about the conferees' rejection of House- and Senate-passed provisions regarding privatization of federal air traffic controllers. I was pleased to support Senator LAUTENBERG's bipartisan amendment on this issue, which passed the Senate 56 to 41. I want to reinforce what my colleague Senator REID said yesterday about the air traffic control system. The privatization issue must be dealt with fairly, or the bill will not pass the Senate.

Another particularly egregious violation of the conference process was a provision the conferees added affecting the Essential Air Service program, which helps small, rural communities maintain their vital commercial air service. In my State, five communities participate in EAS: Alamogordo, Carlsbad, Clovis, Hobbs, and Silver City. For these communities, commercial air service provides a critical link to the national and international transportation network that would not otherwise exist.

The FAA reauthorization bill originally reported by the Senate Commerce Committee would have required EAS communities for the first time to pay to maintain their commercial air. In my view, this ill-timed proposal would have jeopardized existing commercial air service in many rural areas. Across America, our small communities are facing depressed economies and declining tax revenues and are simply not in a position to pay for their commercial air service.

To help preserve essential air service, Senator INHOFE and I offered an amendment with 13 cosponsors that struck out the mandatory cost-sharing language. Our bipartisan amendment was adopted on a voice vote. In parallel, Representatives MCHUGH, PETERSON of Pennsylvania, and SHUSTER offered an amendment that struck out similar mandatory cost-sharing language in the House's bill.

As a followup to our amendment, Senator SNOWE and I, along with Senators NELSON of Nebraska, BUNNING, SCHUMER, BROWNBAC, LINCOLN, JEFFORDS, CLINTON, INHOFE, LEAHY, PRYOR, COLLINS, HAGEL, GRASSLEY, and HARKIN, sent a bipartisan letter to the chairman and ranking member of the Commerce Committee reinforcing our strong opposition to mandatory cost-sharing for EAS communities.

Most students of Government would tell you that when a majority of both houses of Congress have voted against a particular measure, the conferees couldn't arbitrarily put it back in. Well, they did. Section 408 of the conference report basically restores the very cost-sharing language both

Houses one month before had voted to reject.

This week, with the FAA conference report soon going to be recommitted to the conference, 16 Senators wrote to the conferees expressing grave concern over the restoration of the mandatory cost-sharing language and urging them to drop this harmful provision before the conference report is brought back to the full House and Senate. Thirty-five members of the House signed a similar bipartisan letter.

I want to pass an FAA reauthorization bill. The FAA plays an important role in assuring the safety of the traveling public. At the same time, New Mexico's 51 airports are in desperate need of the Federal funding provided under the FAA's Airport Improvement Program. I hope all Senators are aware that AIP was not extended under the first continuing resolution, and all new airport construction projects are on hold pending the reauthorization. With the serious unemployment situation the Nation faces, this is no time to shut down the jobs these vital airport construction projects produce.

I've come to the floor today to urge the conferees to work together in a bipartisan manner to produce a conference report that all Senators can support. Inserting controversial measures in conference that are opposed by both houses has left us with an FAA conference report that is essentially dead. In my opinion, imposing mandatory cost sharing for EAS communities, which a majority in both houses rejected, will only delay further the FAA reauthorization bill.

I do believe that by returning the FAA bill to conference we can begin to work in a bipartisan manner to restore integrity to the conference process that all Senators should demand. When this bill goes back to conference, I urge the FAA conferees to do the right thing for rural communities across America by preserving the Essential Air Service Program.

I ask unanimous consent to print the above-referenced letters in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, July 24, 2003.

Hon. JOHN MCCAIN,
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. ERNEST HOLLINGS,
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR GENTLEMEN: We want to thank you for your leadership in developing S. 824, "The Aviation Reinvestment and Revitalization Vision Act" (AIR-V). As you lead the Senate conferees and complete work on settling differences in the House companion, H.R. 2115, we want to express our support for the Senate position and our strong opposition to the inclusion of any Essential Air Service (EAS) mandatory cost-sharing language in the final legislative package.

As you know, EAS provides subsidized commercial air service to 125 small commu-

nities nationwide that would otherwise be cut off from the air transportation network. The Committee-reported version of S. 824 includes a number of innovative provisions to help EAS communities grow their ridership, including a marketing incentive program that would financially reward EAS towns for achieving ridership goals. At the same time, the Committee's bill proposed a pilot program requiring a 10 percent annual community cost-sharing requirement at EAS airports within 100 miles of any hub airport. In the end, the full Senate did not endorse the concept of an annual local community match, having on June 12 unanimously approved an amendment offered by Senators BINGAMAN and INHOFE to strike the EAS cost-sharing provisions in S. 824. In addition, the House passed its FAA Reauthorization bill after voting not to include cost-sharing for EAS.

While the Commerce Committee's proposed cost-sharing would have only applied to an EAS community under certain specific conditions, we remain concerned about the concept of mandatory cost-sharing. Some of these cash-strapped communities in economically depressed rural areas of our states would be unable to contribute the hundreds of thousands of dollars necessary to keep their air service. As such, we ask that the final version of the FAA Reauthorization legislation reflect the Senate's position on this issue and not include any EAS cost-sharing language.

We look forward to working with you and other members of the Senate Commerce Committee on modernizing and strengthening the EAS program. Thank you for your consideration of our views on this issue and we hope they will be considered during the upcoming conference committee.

Sincerely,

Olympia Snowe, Jeff Bingaman, E. Benjamin Nelson, Jim Bunning, Charles Schumer, Sam Brownback, Blanche L. Lincoln, James M. Jeffords, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Jim Inhofe, Patrick Leahy, Mark Pryor, Susan Collins, Chuck Hagel, Chuck Grassley, Tom Harkin.

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, September 29, 2003.

Hon. JOHN MCCAIN,
Chairman, Committee on Commerce Science and Transportation, Dirksen Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. ERNEST F. HOLLINGS,
Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce Science and Transportation, Dirksen Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. JAMES OBERSTAR,
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

GENTLEMEN: We write out of grave concern for a provision added to the Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization conference report regarding the adoption of a local cost share for certain Essential Air Service communities. This addition to the conference report not only goes against the will of both the House and the Senate, but may also have a disastrous effect on many of our small rural airports. Therefore, we urge the conference committee to remove this language before bringing the report to the respective floors for a vote.

The local cost share provision was removed from S. 824 by a bipartisan amendment offered by 15 senators, which passed on a voice vote. Likewise, a similar local cost share provision was removed from H.R. 2115 by an

amendment offered by Representatives McHugh, Peterson (PA) and Shuster.

It is our understanding that negotiations are currently under way to remove language from the conference report regarding the privatization of air traffic controllers. This provides the conference committee an excellent opportunity to remove the EAS local match provision that was already stricken on both the House and Senate floors and not included in either bill brought to the conference committee.

Additionally, this provision will have untold effects on many small rural communities. It is unacceptable to force communities to pay up to \$100,000 in a local cost share, in addition to the many costs they currently incur in running a small local airport.

We respectfully request the removal of Section 408 from the Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act conference report before it is brought to the House and Senate floors for consideration, and we look forward to working with you in the future to ensure rural communities continue to receive essential air service.

Sincerely,

Jeff Bingaman, Olympia Snowe, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Patrick Leahy, Blanche L. Lincoln, Jim Jeffords, Mark Pryor, Tom Harkin, Charles Schumer, Tom Daschle, Arlen Specter, E. Benjamin Nelson, Susan M. Collins, Chuck Grassley, Mark Dayton, Chuck Hagel.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,

Washington, DC, September 24, 2003.

Hon. JOHN MCCAIN,
Chairman, Committee on Commerce Science and Transportation, Dirksen Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. FRITZ HOLLINGS,
Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce Science and Transportation, Dirksen Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. JAMES OBERSTAR,
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN YOUNG, CHAIRMAN MCCAIN, RANKING MEMBER OBERSTAR, RANKING MEMBER HOLLINGS: We write out of grave concern for a provision added to the Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Conference Report regarding the adoption of a local cost share for certain Essential Air Service communities. This addition to the conference report not only goes against the will of both the House and the Senate, but may also have a disastrous effect on many of our small rural airports. Therefore, we urge the conference committee to remove this language before bringing the report to the respective floors for a vote.

As you know, the local cost share provision was removed in H.R. 2115 by an amendment offered by Representatives McHugh, Peterson (PA) and Shuster, which passed by a voice vote. Likewise, a similar local cost share provision was removed from S. 824 by an amendment offered by Senator Bingaman.

It is our understanding that negotiations are currently under way to remove language from the conference report regarding the privatization of air traffic controllers. This provides the conference committee an excellent opportunity to remove the EAS local match provision that was already stricken on both the House and Senate floors and not included in either bill brought to the conference committee.

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We respectfully request the removal of Section 408 from the Vision 100—Century of Aviation reauthorization Act Conference Report before it is brought to the House and Senate floors for consideration and we look forward to working with you in the future to ensure rural communities continue to receive essential air service.

Sincerely,

John E. Peterson, Allen Boyd, John McHugh, Jerry Moran, Bill Shuster, Chris Cannon, John Shimkus, Marion Berry, Barbara Cubin, Charles F. Bass, Ron Paul, John Tanner, Frank D. Lucas, Scott McInnis, Kenny C. Hulshof, Rick Renzi, Rob Bishop, Dennis A. Cardoza, Jim Gibbons, Jim Matheson, Ed Case, Anibal Acevedo-Vilá, Mike Ross, Tom Udall, Lane Evans, Timothy Johnson, Bernie Sanders, John Boozman, Tom Latham, Heather Wilson, Ron Lewis, Jo Ann Emerson, Doug Bereuter, Bart Stupak, Collin C. Peterson.

INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY PHARMACIES

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge our Nation's independent community pharmacists for their diligent work, expansion of services, and consistent high quality service.

Independent community pharmacies are a strong part of our health care delivery system and a significant part of local economies. In fact, independent pharmacies, independent pharmacy franchises, and independent chains represent a \$67 billion marketplace. Clearly, independent pharmacies create jobs while providing high quality services to consumers.

Independent community pharmacies play a critical role in local communities, a role which has enhanced the level and quality of pharmacist-patient personal interactions and has led to high satisfaction rates from consumers. Independent pharmacies should be commended for their accessibility, immense knowledge about medications, and broad inventories of medications. These observations were validated by more than 32,000 readers surveyed by Consumer Reports, which found that "more than 85 percent of customers at independent drugstores were very satisfied or completely satisfied with their experience."

Pharmacists are health care professionals who consistently strive to improve care and promote the safe use of drugs. In addition to dispensing medications, many independent pharmacies offer other services to meet the needs of their customers. This includes providing health screenings, disease management information, and even home delivery.

I am honored today to recognize the achievements of independent pharmacies for their excellent job in serv-

ing the pharmaceutical and other health care needs of consumers in their communities. As Congress moves forward with enacting a Medicare prescription drug benefit, it is essential that we preserve the quality care being provided by community pharmacies.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to print in the RECORD an article from the October 2003 issue of Consumer Reports.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

TIME TO SWITCH DRUGSTORES?

If you're among the 47 percent of Americans who get medicine from drugstore giants such as CVS, Eckerd, and Rite Aid, here's a prescription: Try shopping somewhere else. The best place to start looking is one of the 25,000 independent pharmacies that are making a comeback throughout the U.S.

Independent stores, which were edging toward extinction a few years ago, won top honors from Consumer Reports readers, besting the big chains by an eye-popping margin. More than 85 percent of customers at independent drugstores were very satisfied or completely satisfied with their experience, compared with 58 percent of chain-drugstore customers.

Many supermarket and mass-merchant pharmacies also did a better job than the best-known conventional chains at providing caring, courteous, knowledgeable, and timely service. And in a nationwide price study we conducted, the chains we evaluated charged the highest prices—even slightly more than the independents.

Those findings come from our latest investigation into the best places to shop for prescription medications. More than 32,000 readers told us about more than 40,000 experiences at 31 national and regional drugstore chains (like CVS, Genovese, Osco, Rite Aid, and Walgreens); supermarket-pharmacy combos (such as Kroger, Publix, and Safeway); mass-merchant pharmacies (like Costco, Target, and Wal-Mart); and independent pharmacies across the nation.

For most consumers, insurance covers at least some of the cost of prescription drugs, so our Ratings emphasize service factors that affect everyone. For consumers who have to pay more than a small percentage of their prescription-drug costs, including more than a third of our readers, our price study indicated where to save money. (See Where to shop, how to save.)

Among the other highlights of our research:

Some of the drugstore chains and supermarkets that readers favored are family owned or businesses in which workers have a stake. Medicine Shoppe, the top "chain," is actually a collection of about 1,000 individually owned and operated stores with a common parent company. Among supermarkets, high-rated Wegmans (in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania) is family owned; and at high-rated Publix (in the South), most workers are stockholders.

Forty percent of readers said that at least once during the past year, their drugstore was out of the medicine they needed.

Our market basket of a month's worth of five widely prescribed medications cost \$377 to \$555, depending on where we shopped. For a family needing all five drugs, that difference would exceed \$2,000 a year.

SORTING OUT THE STORES

Most people start by searching for a store that accepts their insurance plan. Fortunately, that isn't the hassle it used to be, especially since independents are accepting

more plans these days. Insurers once considered the disparate stores too much trouble to work with, but they realized that keeping independents out of their networks alienated customers and didn't cut costs as much as they'd hoped. Also, 33 states have adopted "any willing provider" laws, which require insurance companies to take into their networks any pharmacy that's willing to accept the insurer's reimbursement rate. As a result, you have a greater choice of where and how to shop.

The basic choices:

Independents: Service is all. Prescription drugs are the independents' lifeblood, accounting for 88 percent of sales. That means independents can be a good source of hard-to-find medications. (The chains, where drugs account for 64 percent of sales, tend to focus on the 200 most-prescribed drugs.)

That focus on prescriptions can mean more personal attention. Readers said that pharmacists at independent stores were accessible, approachable, and easy to talk to, and that they were especially knowledgeable about medications, both prescription and nonprescription.

The independents (and some chains) offer extras such as disease-management education, in-store health screenings for cholesterol, services such as compounding (customizing medications for patients with special needs), and home delivery.

Many independents are affiliated with programs such as Good Neighbor or Value-Rite, whose names you'll see in the stores. These "banner" programs, offered by wholesale product suppliers, help independents with marketing and with the sale of private-label products, improving purchasing power and name recognition much the way ServiStar and True Value help small hardware stores compete with Home Depot and Lowe's.

About half of the nation's independents have Web sites, where you can generally order medicine and find some health information but not much more.

Chains: Convenient but crowded. With about 20,000 stores nationwide, mega-drugstores are in nearly everyone's backyard. Many are open around the clock, have a drive-through pharmacy for faster pickup, and let you order online or by punching a few numbers on a telephone. You can even set up your Web account to have renewals automatically processed and readied for pickup or mailing. The biggest chains let you check prices online. Another advantage: The chains accept payment from lots of health plans (managed care pays for 80 percent of all conventional-chain prescriptions).

Now for the drawbacks. The chains' locations in populous areas and their acceptance of a plethora of plans has made them, in effect, too popular, and service is suffering. Except for Medicine Shoppe, chains typically made readers wait longer, were slower to fill orders, and provided less personal attention than other types of drugstores.

Like other drugstores, the chains have experienced shrinking reimbursement from insurers. They've helped maintain profits by selling everything from milk to Halloween costumes. That makes one-stop shopping possible (if your list isn't too specific), but it also can create bottlenecks at the checkout.

Supermarkets: One stop does it. There are fewer than 9,000 supermarkets that include a pharmacy, but the number is rising. One-stop shopping is the attraction. Many supermarkets put the pharmacy near the entrance for easy access and to attract store traffic. For those very reasons, however, you may not have as much privacy to consult with the druggist as you would elsewhere.

Supermarkets have online pharmacy sites, usually as a link from the home page, but they're often less comprehensive than those of big drugstore chains.