

covered by Medicare. These services include specially-trained oncology nurses and supportive care services important to performing first rate cancer care. Although the new Medicare law increases reimbursements to physicians and provides much needed compensation for oncology nursing, it reduces how much Medicare will reimburse for chemotherapy beginning in 2005. While I support the sound and innovative advancements the Medicare law provides, it is important not to jeopardize cancer care through decreases in reimbursements.

Congress understood the impact the Medicare law would have on patient access and included a temporary one-year increase in physicians' practice expenses. However, this provision will expire in 2005 and could reduce access to care.

The "Ensuring Quality and Access to Cancer Care Act of 2004" would extend the one-year transitional period already established in the law for an additional year. It allows a compromise so Congress has the time it needs to further debate this issue, ask important questions regarding the impact of payment reductions and better understand how Medicare should reimburse for services provided to cancer patients.

U.S. COMMISSION ON OCEAN POLICY

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I rise today to again acknowledge the important work and contributions of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. The Ocean Commission, consisting of 16 distinguished individuals, was established by the President pursuant to the Oceans Act of 2000, legislation I sponsored to bring special attention to the problems facing our oceans and coasts, and to lead to recommendations for a new national ocean policy. The Oceans Act directed the Ocean Commission to submit a report to Congress and the President of its findings and recommendations regarding national ocean policy. Exactly one month from now, the Ocean Commission will release its final report, which reflects the deliberations, findings, and comments generated by 15 public meetings, 17 site visits, 37 State Governors and over 700 stakeholders.

The last time an oceans report of this magnitude was issued was over thirty years ago. The report of the Stratton Commission led to the creation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and passage of landmark legislation protecting our fisheries and coasts. I have read the preliminary report of this Ocean Commission, and I can tell you it is very balanced and comprehensive. The final report, when it is issued, will no doubt influence ocean policy for years to come, and has already inspired oceans legislation which my colleagues and I have introduced in the House and Senate. I am also currently developing legislation

that will set out a national vision for ocean policy, conservation, research, and education, building upon the commission's recommendations.

Reports do not write themselves, and today I am taking a moment to acknowledge the tireless efforts of Admiral James Watkins, USN (Ret.), Chairman of the Ocean Commission, the Commissioners, and their staff. Admiral Watkins deserves to be commended for leading this monumental task and generating the attention it so wisely deserves. Dr. Tom Kitsos, as Executive Director, should also be recognized for bringing a well balanced report to completion. Each of the Commissioners should be applauded for lending their valuable expertise and a considerable amount of their own time to this task: Dr. Robert Ballard, Ted Beattie, Lillian Borrone, Dr. James Coleman, Ann D'Amato, Lawrence Dickerson, Vice Admiral Paul Gaffney, USN (Ret.), Marc Hershman, Paul Kelly, Christopher Koch, Dr. Frank Muller-Karger, Edward Rasmuson, Dr. Andrew Rosenberg, William Ruckelshaus, and Dr. Paul Sandifer.

I know Admiral Watkins, Dr. Kitsos and my colleagues share my appreciation of the commission staff, who wore many hats and put in countless hours to craft a fine report. The commissioners and Dr. Kitsos obtained invaluable advice and support from Terry Schaff and editorial expertise and advice from Morgan Gopnik. At the heart of the report were the staff who lent their considerable talents to developing the major themes in each of the working groups and in actually drafting the recommendations. Laura Cantral, Aimee David, and Gerhard Kuska contributed their expertise to the discussions on governance. The stewardship working group was ably assisted by Captain Malcolm Williams, USCG (Ret.), Brooks Bowen, Angela Corridore, and Frank Lockhart. Research, education, and marine operations issues were developed with the skilled support of Ken Turgeon, Captain George White, NOAA, Roxanne Nikolaus, and Chris Blackburn.

A report of this weight depends on careful execution of a public relations strategy. Kate Naughten, Peter Hill, and Michael Kearns are to be commended for their liaison work with the government and press. And we all know that every office would not function without a solid administrative support team. Lee Benner, Macy Moy, Polin Cohanne, Sylvia Boone, Robyn Scrafford, Stacy Pickstock and Nekesha Hamilton are to be congratulated for managing the day-to-day operations of the commission.

My heartfelt thanks go to everyone on the commission for a job well done.

ABUSE OF CONTRACT FUNDS IN IRAQ

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the alarming incidence of U.S. contract funds being

abused in Iraq. These violations range from the abandonment of vehicles, each worth \$85,000, to significant project overruns involving tens of millions of tax dollars. The scope of these wasteful and fraudulent activities is both disturbing and unacceptable.

At this critical juncture in Iraq's rehabilitation, contractors and their administrators should be providing contracted services and goods with maximum efficiency.

As an American, I am proud of and thankful of the men and women who have traveled to Iraq to help restore this country. They risk their lives and, sadly, some have given their lives. However, stories of outright waste and fraud involving contract funds are deeply disturbing.

Three themes have emerged from the abuse of U.S. contracts in Iraq: task order violations, the absence of cost controls, and inconsistent oversight.

Numerous contract officers have used existing procurement or task orders to obtain services and goods beyond the scope of approved contracts. For instance, during December 2003, the Army acquired interrogators for Iraqi prisons via a contract marked for the Department of Interior information technology purchases. Interior contract officers negotiated interrogation services through an open-ended agreement laden with tenuous connections to technology. In such circumstances, new procurement items should only be obtained under open and fair competition.

The absence of consistent cost controls has also attributed to the misuse of contract funds. The General Accounting Office reports that a significant portion of task orders, associated with defense logistical support contracts in Iraq, have been granted without concrete specifications, deadlines, and prices. The prevalence of open-ended contracts have fueled inefficiency and numerous project overruns exceeding 100 percent. Unfortunately, the absence of a well-trained procurement workforce in Iraq has impeded efforts to counter these adverse outcomes.

In the presence of fragmented oversight, the misuse of contract funds has further escalated. Currently, the Coalition Provisional Authority, CPA, only has oversight of contracts associated with reconstruction and Task Order 44 of the U.S. Army's Logistical Operations Civil Acquisition Program, LOGCAP, which provides CPA logistical support, yet all other contractors in Iraq are audited by agency inspector General, IG, offices. It is anticipated that the challenges of fostering accountability will substantially increase after the handover of Iraq on June 30, 2004. The CPA IG reports that 60 days after the handover, CPA audit activities will be merged into the State Department's IG Office. This office will oversee all U.S. contracts in Iraq including those managed by the Department of Defense. Government officials forecast that this change