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report of that Commission, dated September 1966 (with an accompanying report); to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

PETITIONS AND MEMORIALS

Petitions, etc., were laid before the Senate, and referred as indicated:

By the ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore:

A resolution of the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; to the Committee on Public Works:

"RESOLUTIONS MEMORIALIZING THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF CONTRIBUTION UNDER THE FEDERAL WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ACT BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO MUNICIPALITIES CONSTRUCTION POLLUTION CONTROL PROJECTS

"Resolved, That the General Court of Massachusetts respectfully urges the Congress of the United States to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act by providing that the contribution of the federal government to municipalities constructing water pollution control facilities be increased to an amount equal to forty per cent of the estimated reasonable cost of such facilities.

"House of Representatives, adopted August 31, 1966.

"WILLIAM C. MAIERS,
"Clerk.

"Senate, adopted in concurrence, September 1, 1966.

"THOMAS A. CHADWICK,
"Clerk.

"A true copy. Attest:

"KEVIN H. WHITE,
"Secretary of the Commonwealth."

A letter in the nature of a petition, signed by Pedro Juan Barbosa, Senator, San Juan, P.R., relating to the report on the status of Puerto Rico; to the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.

A letter in the nature of a petition from the Puerto Rico Free Federation of Labor, Santurce, P.R., signed by Nicolas Noguerras Rivera, president, expressing appreciation to the Senate for the approval of the bill amending the National Labor Standards Act applicable to Puerto Rico; to the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare.

A resolution adopted by the Alabama League of Aging Citizens, Montgomery, Ala., relating to the increased rate of inflation; to the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. STENNIS, from the Committee on Appropriations, with amendments:

H.R. 17637. An act making appropriations for military construction for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1967, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 1695).

By Mr. JACKSON, from the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, without amendment:

S. 2358. A bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to sell reserved phosphate interests of the United States in certain lands located in the State of Florida to the record owners of such lands (Rept. No. 1701);

H.R. 3104. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain lands in Plumas County, Calif., to C. A. Lundy, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 1698);

H.R. 9520. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain lands in Inyo County, Calif., to the personal representative of the estate of Gwilym L. Morris,

Dolores G. Morris, George D. Ishmael, and Verna H. Ishmael (Rept. No. 1697);

H.R. 14754. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to reinstate a certain oil and gas lease (Rept. No. 1700); and

H.R. 16813. An act to transfer to the Atomic Energy Commission complete administrative control of approximately 78 acres of public domain land located in the Otowi section near Los Alamos County (Rept. No. 1696).

By Mr. SIMPSON, from the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, without amendment:

S. 84. A bill to provide for reimbursement to the State of Wyoming for improvements made on certain lands in Sweetwater County, Wyo., if and when such lands revert to the United States (Rept. No. 1699).

BILLS INTRODUCED

Bills were introduced, read the first time, and, by unanimous consent, the second time, and referred as follows:

By Mr. MONDALE (for himself, Mr. BURDICK, Mr. MOSS, and Mr. YARBOROUGH):

S. 3888. A bill to establish a commission to investigate the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization and methods of operation of the executive branch of the Government, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Government Operations.

(See the remarks of Mr. MONDALE when he introduced the above bill, which appear under a separate heading.)

By Mr. RIBICOFF:

S. 3889. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide payment for optometrists' services under the program of supplementary medical insurance benefits for the aged; to the Committee on Finance.

(See the remarks of Mr. RIBICOFF when he introduced the above bill, which appear under a separate heading.)

By Mr. HART:

S. 3890. A bill for the relief of Dr. Mauro B. Velilla; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CLARK:

S. 3891. A bill for the relief of Dr. Carlos Victor De La Concepcion Garcia; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. ALLOTT (for himself and Mr. DOMINICK) (by request):

S. 3892. A bill to permit a compact or agreement between the several States, for the uniform treatment of certain matters related to taxation; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CASE:

S. 3893. A bill for the relief of Benjamin De Klyn; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MCCARTHY:

S. 3894. A bill to authorize the Commodity Credit Corporation to purchase hay and make it available for use in feeding livestock in disaster and other emergency areas, and to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to make cost assistance payments to livestockmen on hay purchased to feed livestock in areas affected by catastrophes, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry.

(See the remarks of Mr. MCCARTHY when he introduced the above bill, which appear under a separate heading.)

ADDRESSES, EDITORIALS, ARTICLES, ETC., PRINTED IN THE RECORD

On request, and by unanimous consent, addresses, editorials, articles, etc., were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

By Mr. MONRONEY:

Address by Postmaster General Lawrence F. O'Brien at the dedication of the Wheeling,

W. Va., Post Office Building, Saturday, October 1, 1966, together with a program of events of the dedication ceremonies.

LIMITATION ON STATEMENTS DURING THE TRANSACTION OF ROUTINE MORNING BUSINESS

On request of Mr. MANSFIELD, and by unanimous consent, statements during the transaction of routine morning business were ordered limited to 3 minutes.

NARCOTIC ADDICT TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION

Mr. MANSFIELD. Madam President, yesterday the Senate passed the bill, H.R. 9167, which, if enacted, will establish the badly needed machinery to commence rehabilitation procedures for drug addiction. In his outstanding presentation of the measure the senior Senator from Arkansas [Mr. McCLELLAN] pointed out that by combining the flexible tools of medicine, and psychiatry, reeducation and job training, and family and neighborhood supervision, the measure will serve immensely to enable the addict to lead a normal and productive life, resisting the stresses which initially led him to drugs.

I wish to commend Senator McCLELLAN highly for the splendid manner in which he, more than anyone, assured the success of this proposal. In doing so he has performed an outstanding public service and one which he can add to a long list of magnificent achievements.

Joining Senator McCLELLAN to assure this great success yesterday was the senior Senator from New York [Mr. JAVITS] and his colleague [Mr. KENNEDY] who, as we all know, represent a State which is leading the way in the field of treatment for the narcotic addict. Also to be commended for supporting this measure and for offering his own sincere and persuasive views is the senior Senator from Connecticut [Mr. DOB]. All of us know how long and hard he worked in helping to bring this measure before the Senate.

Finally, the senior Senator from Maryland [Mr. BREWSTER] and the junior Senator from Massachusetts [Mr. KENNEDY], are to be thanked for the support they offered on this proposal in such a typically strong and articulate manner.

EXECUTIVE ORGANIZATION REVIEW COMMISSION

Mr. MONDALE. Madam President, on behalf of myself and Senators BURDICK, MOSS, and YARBOROUGH, I introduce, for appropriate reference, a bill to establish a periodic Executive Organization Review Commission.

There is a definite need today for a new Hoover Commission. In the 11 years since the second Hoover Commission presented its final report, the Federal budget has grown by almost \$50 billion; Federal civilian employment has risen from 2,324,000 to 2,806,000; and we

have undergone a continuing proliferation of departments, commissions, bureaus, boards, offices, independent establishments, and other executive agencies.

According to the annual report of the Government Operations Committee on "Organization of Federal Executive Departments and Agencies," there were at the beginning of this year some 53 so-called independent agencies in the executive branch, in addition to the 11 Cabinet departments. This represents an increase from 46 independent agencies 10 years ago. But the actual change has been much greater. We have seen within that 10 years the creation of at least 44 new agencies—some only temporary—and the abolition or transfer of a number only slightly smaller.

The creation of each of these agencies may have been justified in terms of its own individual mission. But when we step back and look at the whole Federal structure, we see numerous policy areas where program responsibility is scattered widely through the executive establishment. There is education, where according to an analysis submitted in support of the President's 1967 budget:

Ten Cabinet departments and more than 15 other agencies support or conduct education, training, and related programs as an integral part of their agency's mission.

Or we can look at consumer protection, a field in which I have a special interest—here, according to one recent report, there are 33 Federal agencies engaged in 296 consumer protection activities. And the number of agencies that deal with urban affairs—even after the creation of a new Cabinet Department of Housing and Urban Development—is still enormous.

And as we all are aware, the magnificent work of this 89th Congress has contributed considerably to the complexity of our Federal Establishment. We have enacted vast new programs, like medicare. We have multiplied Federal support of education. We have taken bold new steps in civil rights, in fighting air and water pollution, in completely reshaping food for peace, in agriculture and rural development, in meeting the crisis of our cities, and in other fields too numerous and too widespread to recount here today.

But, inevitably, we have thought of each program mainly in terms of how it would meet a particular need, how it would relate to the duties of a particular agency. We have not given enough attention to how everything fits together. And we have not acted to insure that we have an overall Federal structure which can really do the job we have called on it to do, and do this job in as effective and economical a manner as possible.

A new Hoover-type commission can provide us with the fresh new look we need. It can help us chart a course toward a more efficient and effective Federal Establishment.

I need not elaborate on the accomplishments of the first and second Hoover Commissions. Two of our distinguished colleagues, Senators McCLELLAN and AIKEN, sat on these Commissions. Many others among today's Senators were

present in this body while these Commissions were active. They know the record of the first Commission's recommendations, 72 percent were adopted. For the second, the score was 64 percent.

Among the major accomplishments were creation of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and the General Services Administration, major reorganizations in State and Defense, modernization of Federal budgeting, improvement of the Federal career service—and the saving of many billions of dollars.

Yet despite these achievements, we have let more than 11 years elapse since the second Hoover Commission submitted its report.

This is not to imply, of course, that these 11 years have seen no action on this vast problem.

In the Executive Office of the President, the Bureau of the Budget has a continuing responsibility for promoting organizational efficiency. The General Accounting Office oversees program operations for the Congress.

President Johnson has demonstrated a continuing concern for building a more efficient Federal structure. The new Department of Housing and Urban Development is living testimony to his work, and that of his predecessor. And the Senate has just approved the President's call for creation of a Department of Transportation.

Here in the Senate, my distinguished colleague from Connecticut [Mr. RIBICOFF] has been holding very important hearings in the Subcommittee on Executive Reorganization which he heads. The Ribicoff subcommittee has already made a breakthrough in the field of auto safety, and it has now turned its attention to a review of the range and adequacy of our programs to meet the crisis of urban areas.

I hope all of these efforts will continue. Yet there is still, I strongly feel, a need for a periodic, comprehensive review of the entire range of Federal organization, a review conducted by a bipartisan, high-level body independent of the executive and the Congress, a review to give us periodically a fresh new look, a review which a new Hoover Commission can best provide.

My bill would establish such a commission.

Unlike earlier such legislation, my bill would recognize that executive reorganization can no longer be treated as a one-shot affair. Our Government will continue to grow, just as our Nation is growing. If we do not take a periodic hard look at its overall operation, we may one day be confronted with a bureaucratic tangle that it is impossible to unravel. For in the words of Harry S. Truman:

The improvement of the organization of government is a continuous and never-ending process.

To provide such a periodic look, my bill explicitly calls for the appointment of a new Commission every 10 years. Should the Congress feel that an organizational overhaul is urgently needed before that time, it could create a new Commission sooner. Thus the time period between

studies would not be rigid, unable to be adapted to unanticipated future needs. But my proposal would guarantee that, barring future congressional action to the contrary, we would have an overall organizational review at least once a decade.

On each Commission would serve 12 distinguished citizens—2 from each House of Congress, 2 from the executive branch, and 6 from private life. To insure bipartisanship, no more than 6 of the 12 members could belong to the same political party.

The Commission would serve approximately 30 months, submitting its report not later than March 1 of the third year after its establishment. This would allow enough time for an organized, systematic, and thorough review.

The Commission would submit periodic reports on its findings and recommendations as it deems appropriate, and then a final report summarizing previous proposals and making final recommendations. Having submitted this report, it would cease to exist, until its successor was appointed 7½ years later.

In the interim between Commissions, this bill would provide for the Comptroller General to maintain records of the action by the Congress and the executive branch on the last Commission's recommendations. The records and papers of Commissions that had completed their work would, according to established procedures, be deposited in the National Archives, where they would, I am assured, be available to the public at large.

The Commission would have broad powers. It could hire a substantial staff, headed by an executive director. It could draw on experts from many walks of national life. It would hold hearings, have general access to Federal records, and make use of the most up-to-date data processing equipment. And it would serve long enough to contract out special studies to scholars and other independent investigators, and receive their reports in time for careful consideration.

And most important of all, the Commission would be given a broad mandate.

One major objective would be cost cutting. This is particularly important at a time when we have an economy under serious inflationary pressures. But the elimination of duplication and unnecessary expenses, the saving of every dollar we can possibly save, should always have the highest priority.

And if efficiency is vital, so also is program effectiveness. I have already pointed out, as have so many of my colleagues before me, that just to pass a law here on the Hill does not guarantee the type of program we want, directed toward the people we want it to benefit. The Nation will be shortchanged if programs become bogged down in unnecessary redtape. The Government must be organized so as to implement these programs, so as to put flesh on the skeleton of legislative intent.

So the Commission would consider questions involving the possible establishment of new departments and the elimination or the modification of present ones. It would examine the present or-

ganizational structure, and the principles upon which it is based. It would look closely at the record of recent organizational innovations—such as the Office of Economic Opportunity in the Executive Office of the President, or the new Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In other words, it would be expected to investigate, in the most comprehensive way possible, how the policies and programs set forth by this Congress can be most effectively and economically accomplished.

Here let me make one crucial point. A truly efficient and effective Government organization is not just one that can circulate paper rapidly—though we all know how much this would help—or coordinate its programs here at the Washington end. It also must be an organization which can be responsive, as never before, to the needs and requests and demands of communities and individual citizens throughout the United States.

Here, I am convinced, is one of the great unsolved problems of Government organization. How can a large bureaucracy, with its labyrinth of regulations and redtape, with employees numbering in the millions, operating increasingly through impersonal machines and processes—how can this Government be truly responsive in its program to the needs of the man at the local level?

To take one example, I have noticed time after time, in my brief service in this body, how local school boards, or community action councils in the poverty program, will spend months working their hearts out on a proposal for Federal grant assistance, to meet what they are convinced is an obvious community need, only to find that their proposal is out of tune with the guidelines or the priorities, or that no more money is available this year for that particular program. And during all this time, all too often, contact and communication between the local people and agency representatives here in Washington or in the field has been negligible.

Part of our job as Senators, of course, is to help to supply this vital human element, to serve as a bridge of communication between our constituents and the executive branch. I am not advocating that we relinquish this role. Every day Members of Congress receive hundreds of requests from citizens and communities to help them break through bureaucratic logjams. As elected representatives of the people, we shall continue to help them out in every way possible.

But this problem is too big to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. It pervades the whole system we have established of Federal assistance to help meet local needs. This problem urgently needs the type of study this Commission could be expected to provide. For the executive agencies should be more responsive on their own to the needs of citizens, without so much prodding from Capitol Hill, and in all cases, not just those that come to the attention of Senators and Congressmen.

This must be one of the paramount objectives of our federal system. And so any executive organization review commission should not aim only to eliminate nonessential and duplicated services, and to reduce administrative costs, vital though this is. It should also study concrete ways to make Federal agencies more responsive to the needs of individuals and communities at the local level.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of this bill be reprinted at this point in the RECORD, together with a short summary of its major provisions.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The bill will be received and appropriately referred; and, without objection, the bill and summary will be printed in the RECORD.

The bill (S. 3888) to establish a commission to investigate the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization and methods of operation of the executive branch of the Government, and for other purposes, introduced by Mr. MONDALE (for himself and other Senators), was received, read twice by its title, referred to the Committee on Government Operations, and ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 3888

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION

SECTION 1. (a) Not later than September 1 of the calendar year 1967, and of every tenth year thereafter (unless the Congress shall by law provide for establishment of a new commission before such ten years have expired), a bipartisan commission to be known as the Executive Organization Review Commission (hereinafter referred to as the "Commission") shall be established.

(b) Each such Commission shall be composed of twelve members as follows:

(1) Two appointed by the President of the United States, from the executive branch of Government;

(2) Two Members of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate;

(3) Two Members of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(4) Six persons from private life appointed by the President of the United States, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, acting by common agreement.

(c) Not more than six members shall be from the same political party.

(d) Vacancies in each Commission shall not affect its powers, but shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made.

(e) Each Commission shall elect a Chairman and a Vice Chairman from among its members.

(f) Seven members of each Commission shall constitute a quorum.

COMPENSATION

SEC. 2. (a) Members of the Congress who are members of each Commission shall serve without compensation in addition to that received for their services as Members of Congress. Officers and employees of the executive branch of the Government who are members of each Commission shall serve without compensation in addition to that received for their services as officers or employees of the executive branch of the Government.

(b) Each member of each Commission appointed from private life shall receive compensation at the rate of \$100 per diem for each day on which he is engaged in the performance of duties of the Commission.

(c) All members of each Commission shall be reimbursed by the Commission for travel, subsistence, and other necessary expenses incurred by them in the performance of such duties.

SEC. 3. (a) Each Commission shall conduct a comprehensive study and investigation of the organization and methods of operation of all departments, agencies, and government corporations of the executive branch of the government (including ongoing reorganization powers and mechanisms) to determine the effectiveness and efficiency such organization and methods of operation provide in carrying out the policies of the Congress and the President. Such study and investigation shall include consideration of the following:

(1) reduction of expenditures to the lowest amount consistent with the efficient performance of essential services, activities, and functions, through:

(a) adoption of more efficient methods of operation;

(b) elimination of nonessential services, activities, and functions; and

(c) elimination of duplication of services, activities, and functions; and

(d) elimination of services, activities, and functions which can better be performed by private enterprise;

(2) improvement of the effectiveness of the executive branch in carrying out the policies of the Congress and the President, through:

(a) consolidation and coordination of services, activities, and functions of a similar nature, or contributing to substantially the same policy, including the possible creation of new Cabinet departments and the elimination of existing departments or realignment of their responsibilities;

(b) recruiting of men and women of the highest caliber for Government service and making the most effective and complete use of their talents;

(c) applications of modern management techniques to the methods of operation of the Government; and

(d) improving communications within and between agencies of the executive branch, between the executive and legislative branches, and between the Federal Government and State and local governments; and

(3) improvement of the capability of the executive branch to respond to the needs, requests, and communications of private citizens, businesses, labor unions, and other groups and organizations at the local level, including, but not limited to, coordination of information available to such citizens relating to Federal assistance.

(b) Each Commission may transmit to the President and the Congress such interim reports as it deems advisable, and shall transmit its final report to the President and to the Congress not later than March 1 of the third year after the year in which it is appointed. Such final report shall contain a detailed statement of the findings and conclusions of the Commission together with recommendations for changes in existing organization, including such administration actions and legislative enactments as it deems appropriate. Sixty days after submission of its final report under this subsection, each Commission shall cease to exist.

POWERS OF THE COMMISSION

SEC. 4 (a) Each Commission, or any three members thereof as authorized by such Commission, may conduct hearings anywhere in the United States or otherwise secure data and expressions of opinions pertinent to the study. In connection therewith each Commission is authorized by majority vote—

(1) to require by subpoena the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of all documentary evidence relating to the execution of its duties; (2) to administer oaths;

(3) in the case of disobedience to a subpoena or order issued under this subsection to invoke the aid of any district court of the United States in requiring compliance with such subpoena or order; and

(4) to pay witnesses the same fees and mileage as are paid in like circumstances in the courts of the United States.

(b) Any district court of the United States within the jurisdiction of which an inquiry is carried on may, in case of refusal to obey a subpoena or order issued under subsection (a) of this section, issue an order requiring compliance therewith; and any failure to obey the order of the court may be punished by the court as a contempt thereof.

(c) Each Commission is authorized to require directly from the head of any Federal department, agency, or Government corporation available information deemed useful in the discharge of its duties. Each Federal department, agency or Government corporation is authorized and directed to cooperate with each Commission and to furnish all information requested by each Commission to the extent permitted by law.

(d) Each Commission is authorized to enter into contracts with Federal or State agencies, private firms, institutions, and individuals for the conduct of research or surveys, the preparation of reports, and other activities necessary to the discharge of its duties.

ADMINISTRATION

SEC. 5. (a) Each Commission is authorized, without regard to the civil service laws and regulations or the provisions of chapter 51 of title 5 of the United States Code, to appoint and fix the compensation of an executive director, and the executive director, with the approval of each Commission, may employ and fix the compensation of such additional personnel as may be necessary to carry out the functions of the Commission, but no individual so appointed shall receive compensation in excess of the rate prescribed for GS-18 in the General Schedule of section 5332 of title 5 of the United States Code.

(b) The executive director, with the approval of each Commission, is authorized to obtain services in accordance with the provisions of section 3109 of title 5 of the United States Code, but at rates for individuals not to exceed \$100 per diem.

(c) The head of any Federal department, agency or government corporation is authorized to detail, on a reimbursable basis, any of its personnel to assist in carrying out the duties of each Commission under this Act.

(d) The General Services Administration shall provide administrative services for each Commission on a reimbursable basis.

INTERIM REVIEW: COMPTROLLER GENERAL

SEC. 6. After the submission of the final report as provided in section 2(b) and prior to the appointment of a succeeding commission, the Comptroller General of the United States shall (1) conduct a review of the recommendations of the preceding Commission to determine the extent to which such recommendations have been implemented; (2) maintain appropriate records relating to such recommendations; (3) furnish at the request of a Chairman of an appropriate Committee of the Congress information relating to such recommendations; and (4) report to the President and to the Congress at such times as he deems appropriate on his responsibilities under this section.

AUTHORIZATION

SEC. 7. There is hereby authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

The summary presented by Mr. MONDALE is as follows:

A SHORT SUMMARY OF A BILL TO ESTABLISH AN EXECUTIVE ORGANIZATION REVIEW COMMISSION

1. Periodic Establishment of Commission—on or before September 1, 1967, and every tenth year thereafter, a 12-member Executive Organization Review Commission shall be established, composed of two Senators appointed by the President of the Senate, two Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House, two members of the executive branch chosen by the President of the United States, and six members chosen by the President, Vice President, and Speaker acting in agreement. No more than six of the members shall belong to the same political party.

2. Functions—the Commission's role is similar to that of the earlier Hoover Commissions, to conduct a thorough review of executive branch organizations and make comprehensive recommendations for its improvement. It shall aim at: 1) reducing costs, through elimination of nonessential and duplicating services, and adoption of improved methods of operation; 2) improving effectiveness in carrying out Congressional and Presidential policies, through consolidation and coordination of programs in the same or related fields, modern management techniques, wise personnel policies, and improved interagency and inter-governmental communications; 3) making the government more responsive to the problems and needs of individual citizens and groups at the local level.

3. Powers—the Commission may hold hearings, subpoena witnesses, obtain information from federal agencies, contract out particular research projects, and hire staff without regard to civil service laws.

4. Report and Termination of Commission—the Commission shall make such interim reports as it deems appropriate, and shall transmit its final report to the Congress not later than March of the third year after its appointment. Sixty days after submitting this final report, it shall cease to exist, to be re-established with new membership ten years after its original appointment.

PAYMENT FOR OPTOMETRISTS' SERVICES UNDER PROGRAM OF SUPPLEMENTARY MEDICAL INSURANCE BENEFITS FOR THE AGED

Mr. RIBICOFF. Madam President, I introduce, for appropriate reference, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide payment for optometrists' services under the program of supplementary medical insurance benefits for the aged.

The bill I am introducing today is a simple amendment to iron out a very small wrinkle in the historic Medicare Act passed by the 89th Congress. It would neither add to nor take away from the benefits provided by that act. Its sole purpose is to eliminate the requirement that a patient of an optometrist must first have certification from a medical doctor before obtaining those specific services of an optometrist which are made available under the provisions of title XVIII.

When the Senate passed the bill which is now Public Law 89-97, it was our clear intent that there would be no change in the form or organization of health practices as a result of this law. The doctors would not be changed; the patient's free choice of doctor or hospital would

not alter. The only change was to be in who would pay the bills.

Section 1802 of the act itself stated:

Any individual entitled to insurance benefits under this title may obtain health services from any institution, agency, or person qualified to participate under this title if such institution, agency, or person undertakes to provide him such services.

Under the law as it is being applied, however, a problem has arisen which discriminates against optometrists and those persons who depend upon optometrists for their eye care. Routine eye examinations and the cost of glasses are generally not covered by medicare. There are eye care services, however, which may properly, under appropriate State laws, be performed by optometrists. These services will be paid by medicare, however, only when countersigned by a medical doctor. This extra referral to a medical doctor is unfair both to the patient and to the optometric profession.

It is indeed unfortunate that this has occurred. I do not believe that it was the intent of Congress to require a beneficiary of title XVIII to secure the approval of a physician in order to obtain the services of an optometrist of his choice.

More than 60 million Americans turn to optometrists for eye care. The vast majority of our citizens over age 65 have vision problems. At least 75 percent of them rely on optometrists to determine if they have eye diseases which require medical treatment and to care for their visual impairments when drugs or surgery is not necessary.

Of course, medical doctors are by statute privileged to practice optometry, but that does not mean that optometric care and medical vision care are identical. Both are performed in a highly specialized and skillful manner and require the utmost in professional experience and expertise. Since one complements the other, and lends symmetry to the scope of professional eye care, it is inconceivable that either should be excluded from the medicare basic or supplemental health plan.

Dr. Philip R. Lee, Assistant HEW Secretary for Health and Scientific Affairs, in a recent letter to the Honorable HENRY HELSTOSKI of New Jersey said:

The profession of optometry is accepted by the Department as a legitimate and essential health profession which is performing highly useful functions in promoting solutions to the eye health needs of this Nation.

He also wrote in the same letter:

The Department agrees that the American public should continue to have freedom of choice in the selection of a practitioner to care for vision problems.

From this letter it appears certain to me that in this instance the administration is clearly in agreement with the intent of the Senate, and that is as it should be, but the administration is not carrying out this intent under title XVIII and, according to them, they cannot because of the way the law is drafted.

There is a new interest in the total quality of life rather than merely the length of life, and in the positive elements of good health, for all Americans over 65. Those who are in their golden