

HMOs said Wednesday that they are simply the agents in the middle, passing along the ever-rising price of a high-technology medical system.

"There is a widening gap between high inflation in medical costs and the amount Medicare HMOs are paid" by the federal government, said Alexandra Warnier, spokeswoman at PacificCare Health System's headquarters in Santa Ana, Calif. She said Medicare HMOs are getting an increase of 2.5 percent from Washington, while general medical inflation is climbing at the rate of 6.5 percent a year, and drug costs are rising by 10 percent to 20 percent annually.

"Not only health plans, but doctors and hospitals are being challenged by the widening gap," she said.

But the federal government said its payment rates to Medicare HMOs are "more than generous."

"The Medicare managed care market reflects the trends in the larger health care market," said Michael Hash, deputy administrator of the Health Care Financing Administration.

"We believe and independent experts, including the General Accounting Office confirm that Medicare payment rates are more than generous enough for plans to provide Medicare's basic benefits," he said.

"And this year, every managed care plan that wants to serve Medicare beneficiaries will be paid more in 2000 than in 1999, about 5 percent on average. In some counties, payment rates will increase as much as 12 percent."

Nationally, about 15 percent of the 40 million Medicare beneficiaries persons over 65 and the disabled of all ages are enrolled in HMOs.

Senate Sponsors of Campaign Finance Scale Back Bill By Art Pine

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON The chief Senate sponsors of campaign finance legislation decided Wednesday to scale back their bill substantially before sending it to the Senate floor a sign that they were unable to win enough support to counter an expected filibuster of a more ambitious measure.

Strategists said that Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Russell D. Feingold, D-Wis., will introduce new legislation Thursday that bans "soft-money" contributions to political parties. But they will not try to limit "issue ads," a second often-criticized fund-raising practice.

Although the new, stripped-down version is expected to encounter less resistance in the Senate than their earlier, broader proposal, the sponsors' decision is certain to disappoint some proponents of sweeping campaign finance reform.

The House passed bipartisan legislation Tuesday aimed at reining in both practices and backers had hoped that the step might provide enough momentum to increase support for the more comprehensive McCain-Feingold bill, which is similar to the House measure.

But strategists said the two senators, after a month of conferring with Senate Republicans, had concluded that they would be unable to obtain more than 52 votes for their broader bill and thus would not be able to break an expected GOP filibuster. Sixty votes are needed to end debate and bring legislation to a vote.

Aides to the two lawmakers portrayed the scaling-back as a tactical move, asserting that the two still want to pass broader legislation but had concluded that it is better to start out with a bill that has some prospect of passage.

One strategist said that the two hope to use the narrower bill as a "base" bill and seek to build a coalition that might succeed in expanding the measure on the floor of the chamber. The Senate also could come under pressure in a House-Senate conference committee.

The "soft money" issue is one of the most often-criticized practices in political fund-raising. Current law permits corporations, unions and wealthy individuals to contribute large sums of money to political parties for "party-building" activities without regulation. Direct donations to candidates, so-called "hard money," are subject to strict limits.

The senators' new bill also contains a sweetener for conservatives a provision that would write into law a 1988 U.S. Supreme Court decision which held that nonunion workers who are required to pay union dues can deduct the portion that is used for political purposes.

But the measure would drop an earlier provision designed to tackle a second abuse the use of "issue ads" that avoid regulation because they do not directly urge voters to elect or defeat candidates. Ordinary campaign ads are subject to strict rules.

Both senators were cautiously optimistic about prospects for broadening the bill when it comes to the floor.

McCain said in an interview that the two had realized "we couldn't get to 60 votes just by re-introducing the old McCain-Feingold (bill). I realize it's an uphill fight," he said, but "it's the best shot we have."

Feingold outlined a similar strategy. "The really important thing is what happens on the floor," he said. "We're hoping that the more senators have invested in the outcome (by pushing through amendments of their own), the greater the chance that the bill can be expanded."

The decision by the two senators underscores the sharp differences between the House and Senate on the delicate campaign finance reform issue. The House initially passed broader legislation in August 1998, but the Senate filibustered it to death.

Boxer Filibusters Over Oil Royalties Owed California Faye Fiore

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., brought Senate action to a halt this week on a key spending bill with a filibuster over money considered "chicken feed" by Washington standards a mere \$600,000 in oil royalties owed to California.

The stand-off began last week when Boxer put a hold on a \$28 billion Interior Department spending bill that would give oil companies a break on the royalties annually paid to state and local governments for pumping on public lands. Boxer likened the provision to cheating taxpayers out of rent, much of which would have gone to support California's schools.

The stakes may be relatively small but the debate loomed large, with Boxer's protestations holding up business with the Senate under the gun to pass 13 appropriations bills by Oct. 1, the start of the new fiscal year.

"It's not just the \$600,000 for California, it's making sure we don't condone this kind of thievery," said Boxer's press secretary, David Sandretti. "And even so, that money can hire hundreds of teachers, wire (for computers) thousands of schools. You can do a lot of very good work with \$600,000."

A move to end the filibuster which requires at least 60 votes failed by just five votes Monday. Ultimately, Boxer's crusade is expected to end when a few more missing Republican senators return to Washington, among them Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who is on a book tour promoting his run for president.

But the Senate absenteeism enabled Boxer to hold up action on the spending bill for several days, a symbolic victory if not a legislative one. Politically, she stands to lose little and gain lots.

"The public loves a populist battle against big oil," said Larry Sabato, a University of Virginia political scientist. "And she's not losing a thing because none of the oil companies will ever give her contributions they can't stand her."

The dispute revolves around an Interior Department ruling last year that oil companies had used artificially low prices to calculate royalty payments, costing the Treasury \$66 million annually. The department set new regulations to peg the payments to market prices.

Led by lawmakers from major oil-producing states, Congress has voted on several occasions to block the new pricing policy once late at night when many senators were not present, a maneuver that outraged Boxer.

Inquiry Into English-Only Tests Is Ordered Richard T. Cooper

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON A presidential advisory commission said Wednesday that making children with limited English skills take tests written only in English and using the results to decide such pivotal questions as promotion or graduation may violate their civil rights.

The commission called on the U.S. Department of Education, which is charged with enforcing federal civil rights laws as they apply to schools, to investigate such uses of so-called English-only tests.

"State education leaders have compromised the future of Latino students by making high-stakes decisions based on inaccurate and inadequate information," said the report by the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans.

The Education Department reacted cautiously to the latest news from what has become treacherous territory in both policy and political terms because it is part of the larger realm of bilingual education.

"We appreciate the attention to this area," department spokesman Rodger Murphey said. "We will look at this report, as well as the body of information we collect, as we plan our ... activities."

Murphey said the department's Office of Civil Rights Compliance has previously investigated and pursued cases involving the testing of students with limited English skills and is developing cases in Texas and Nevada. He declined to provide details on the pending investigations.

The issue of English-only tests for students with limited proficiency in the language is particularly sensitive in California. More Latino children with limited English proficiency are enrolled in schools in California than in any other state. And standardized tests, many of them English-only, are likely to play important roles in new educational policies that are being formulated.

Under a new policy mandating an end to social promotion, for example, school districts are in the process of developing criteria to be applied to students in the second, third, fourth, fifth and eighth grades. English-only tests are likely to be part of such criteria.

Testing also will play a role in the state's new accountability system for rating the performance of individual districts, though final decisions on exactly how such data will be used have not been made.

Delaine Eastin, California superintendent of public instruction, said she agrees that using English-only tests is "a serious problem for children who have been in school a short period of time." She favors giving such tests to students with limited English proficiency only after they have attended U.S. schools at least two years.

"Some rule of reasonableness should apply," she said, calling use of English-only tests with children new to the language "ham-handed."

But she said that, as a result of the controversy over bilingual education, "right now California is confused. A lot of people in Sacramento are like deer in the headlights."

California Assemblywoman Carole Migden of San Francisco is the author of a bill on Gov. Gray Davis' desk that would limit the use of English-only tests in measuring school districts' performance.

"Testing scholastic aptitude in English when students haven't had a chance to learn the language in which the test is written is unfair," she said.

Critics of bilingual education, on the other hand, argue that children with limited English skills will suffer in the long term if they are permitted to continue learning and being tested in their native languages.

In Washington, the Center for Equal Opportunity, headed by former Reagan administration official Linda Chavez, has been among the leading critics of using bilingual strategies for Spanish-speaking students.

Under a 1974 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, schools are required to provide assistance to students with limited English skills. But the extent of that assistance and its duration remain matters of dispute.

FCC Allows Cell Phone-Satellite Hookups for 911 Calls **By Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar** **Los Angeles Times**

WASHINGTON A new way of linking satellites and cell phones in an emergency or perhaps only to indulge in a little dining pleasure got a big boost Wednesday from the Federal Communications Commission.

By a 5-0 vote, the commission allowed the introduction of cell phones that use Global Positioning System satellites to flash their location to 911 operators automatically.

Promoters of the link say it has two-way applications, and people who buy the new phones also will be able to get such services as directions when they are lost, or how to find food and lodging in a strange town practically anywhere.

Some 70,000 callers a day use their cell phones to reach 911, but many of them don't know exactly where they are calling from. Three years ago, the FCC set a 2001 deadline for cell phone-service providers to devise a system that would allow 911 operators to automatically pinpoint callers' locations, as is the case with calls from conventional phones.

An unforeseen consequence of the FCC decision was to favor a technology then considered cutting edge, but which is now being challenged.

The FCC effectively confined companies to a network solution that relied on equipment deployed on cell towers to triangulate a signal's location, dependent on handsets that had no capability to use the Global Positioning System, or GPS, to signal their location.

Wednesday's action will allow competition between the network solution and one based on satellite technology.

FCC Chairman Bill Kennard said the decision will help save lives, getting aid to callers more quickly. It will also allow the agency to remain neutral and let the market determine which technology is preferable.

"Today's action will hasten the day when victims of car accidents and those stranded in hurricanes can get help sooner," Kennard said.

An FCC official, who asked not to be named, said there are pros and cons to both systems.

The original network solution would accommodate all 70 million cell phones now on the market, and could be in place more quickly. However, the official said it would be costly to install in low call-volume areas, such as the countryside.

The satellite solution is less expensive, and has been shown to provide a more accurate location in early testing, said the official. However, effectiveness can be hampered if satellite visibility is obscured by tall buildings or other obstacles. The GPS option would also require people to get new handsets, but estimates are that a quarter of all cell phones are replaced every year anyway.

The FCC set a schedule Wednesday so service providers who choose the GPS option do not lag far behind. They would have to begin offering the new handsets in 2001, and 95 percent of their customers would have to have them by October 2002.

Mike Amarosa, a spokesman for King of Prussia, Pa.-based TruePosition Inc., which makes the network system, said his company welcomes the competition. "We can deal with the phones that are out there today and we would be able to deal with (GPS) phones as well," Amarosa said.

Stephen Poizner, president of SnapTrack Inc., a Silicon Valley company marketing the GPS approach, said he believes its accuracy will sell.

But Poizner sees the potential for a multibillion-dollar global market by piggybacking services for travelers on the 911 lifeline.

Travelers could use their GPS link to readily get directions, or assistance in finding the nearest stores or restaurants. (With the network solution, consumers could get those services too, but through a membership association.)

Gunman Fatally Wounds 7, Himself in Texas Church **By Stephanie Simon, John Beckham and Lianne Hart** **Los Angeles Times**

FORT WORTH, Texas As scores of teen-agers sang out prayers, a gunman opened fire Wednesday evening in a Baptist church here, fatally wounding at least seven people and injuring seven more before killing himself.

Shot after shot echoed through the crowded chapel of the Wedgwood Baptist Church. Worshipers thinking at first that it must be a prank kept on singing. But when they realized what was happening, they dove to the floor and scrunched under pews, terrified and silent as the gunfire continued.

Police confirmed that six people were killed during the barrage, which began about 7 p.m. as a concert of contemporary Christian music was about to get under way. A seventh victim died later at the hospital. At least three of the dead were teen-agers. And four of the wounded suffered critical injuries.

The bodies of the gunman and his victims remained in the chapel for hours as bomb squad dogs and a remote-controlled robot searched for possible booby traps. Police said they were afraid to move the shooter's body because they suspected he had strapped explosives to himself. Officials said he apparently used a semiautomatic handgun for the rampage, and may also have tossed a pipe bomb into the sanctuary.

"There's cartridges, shrapnel ... and blood splattered all over the wall," said Lt. David Ellis, a police spokesman.

Witnesses said the gunman was tall, bearded and dressed in black. But their descriptions of his behavior varied: some said he was calm; others said he shouted obscenities or mumbled anti-religious invective. Some said he was smoking a cigarette as he walked into the sanctuary; others said he ordered the worshipers to "stay still" as he began firing indiscriminately.

He later turned his gun on police. And then, as officers closed in, on himself.

"We were just sitting and praising the Lord when we heard some loud noises," said Haley Herron, a 17-year-old high school senior who was attending the concert with a friend. "We all kept singing because we didn't know what was going on."

Her voice faltered. "They kept shooting and shooting and shooting."

She remembered the scene as being eerily quiet: no one screaming. No one crying. Just the bam, bam, bam of bullets. And the boom of an explosion at the front of the sanctuary. She was lying on the

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Immigrant
U.S.
English



1747 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202-833-1100
Fax: 202-833-8108

Fax

To: Julie Fernandez From: Tom Nagle
Fax: 456-5581 Pages: 3 READING THIS PAGE
Phone: 456-6558 Date: 2/13/98
Re: _____

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• Comments

PETITION

TO PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON TO SUPPORT MAKING ENGLISH THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE UNITED STATES

WHEREAS a common language is one of the most powerful forces promoting the unity and cohesiveness of the people of a nation;

WHEREAS the English language has been one of the common threads of the history, culture, tradition, laws and Founding Documents of the United States;

WHEREAS the language common to the vast majority of the citizens of the United States is English;

WHEREAS the overwhelming majority of the citizens of the United States unequivocally support making English the nation's Official Language;

WHEREAS Bill Clinton, as governor of the state of Arkansas supported Official English for Arkansas;

I THEREFORE, as a citizen of the United States, respectfully urge Bill Clinton, as President of the United States, to give the full weight and support of the Office of the Presidency to making English the Official Language of the United States Government.

SIGNED  

DO NOT

Letter of Protest

TO: The Honorable William J. Clinton
President of the United States

Dear President Clinton,

I am writing to you today to protest, in the strongest possible terms, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's interference in the private workplace - dictating to private businesses the languages in which their employees should operate.

As a taxpayer, I resent the fact that a major government agency has taken steps to actively and publicly promote official multi-lingualism - which fosters divisiveness and sends the wrong message that our government condones the idea that citizens do not need to learn English to be productive members of our society with equal access to The American Dream.

I am a staunch supporter of H.R. 123, "The Bill Emerson English Language Empowerment Act," to make English the official language of the U.S. Government. I strongly urge you to issue an Executive Order that the EEOC cease and desist from setting dangerous multi-lingual policies in the private workplace.

Respectfully yours

SIGNED

Riley statement on
CA bilingual educ.
initiative.

immigration
English

Statement of
Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

Helping All Children Learn English
April 27, 1998

As we look to the future of American education, one of the most important new developments is the growing number of immigrant children that we must educate. According to the latest census data, nearly 20 percent of all children in our nation's schools—one out of five—are immigrants or the American-born children of immigrants.

A new study of immigrant children¹ states that 13.7 million children under 18 are either immigrants or the American-born offspring of immigrants, and that they are the fastest growing part of our student population. These children come from over 150 nations with the largest number coming from Mexico, the Phillippines, Cuba, and Vietnam.

Some Americans say that these children are a liability, but I welcome these children, just as the Statue of Liberty or the Golden Gate Bridge has welcomed them for years. They are a great source of strength and hope for the future of America, and we want them to be full participants in the American experience as children and as adults.

These young people, just like generations of immigrants who have come before them, can grow up to be patriotic Americans who will add their voices to our democracy if we educate them to the best of our ability and treat them as we would like to be treated. Indeed, the largest survey ever conducted of immigrant children found that these young people had higher grades and a lower school drop-out rate than other children and overwhelmingly preferred to speak English by the time they were teenagers.²

These young people represent the hopes of immigrant parents who have come to America because they believe in the American dream. They have stood in long visa lines, uprooted their families, left relatives behind, changed careers, often accepted menial jobs and in many cases now work two jobs for one great purpose—to give their children a better life in America. Surely we can meet these people half-way by giving their children the best education possible so that they can make their contribution to the American mainstream.

Teaching these young people English is one of the great tasks of nation-building and it falls to our public schools to accomplish. This is not the first time that the task of educating millions of new immigrants to become good citizens has been given to our nation's public schools. At the turn of the century our nation's public schools successfully taught millions of new immigrants English and educated them about our democracy.

Today, we face the same challenge. There are school districts in almost every part of our country—from Boston to Seattle to Miami—where children speak more than 40 languages. I believe that our nation's public schools can successfully educate these young people if we give them the same opportunities that other students need in order to succeed: higher standards, safe schools, smaller classes, well-prepared teachers, technology in the classroom, after-school activities, and schools that are accountable for results.

President Clinton has made education his number one domestic priority to achieve one end—to prepare all of America's children—native-born and immigrant—for the 21st century. President Clinton has also increased funding for those programs—Title I, immigrant and bilingual education, migrant education, adult education—that directly serve a disproportionate number of immigrant children and their families.

Today, however, there are growing questions about the best way to teach these young people English. In California, these concerns about how to teach English center around Proposition 227, the Unz Initiative, which would effectively eliminate bilingual education and require that all children learn English in one year.

I recognize that the decision to vote for or against the Unz Initiative this coming June is ultimately a decision for the voters of California. I know that there are many well-intentioned and concerned citizens on both sides of this issue and that the people of California are taking this issue seriously.

New immigrants have a passion to learn English and they want the best for their children. We must focus on what is best for the children and in this increasingly diverse society we must make sure that all of America's children are given the best education possible. Our common goal in teaching children English should be to support those approaches that ensure that Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) children are not only speaking English but also making academic progress. Both elements are equally important.

Proposition 227, however, is not the way to go. In my opinion, adoption of the Unz Amendment will lead to fewer children learning English and many children falling further behind in their studies. There are five significant reasons why I believe that the Unz Amendment is counter-productive to a quality education for all of our children.

First, the one year time limit and one-size-fits-all approach to learning English flies in the face of years of research that tells us that children learn in different ways and at different speeds. A recent National Research Council report³ released last month states that, "hurrying young non-English speaking children into reading in English without ensuring adequate preparation is counter-productive." The report recommends that children with no English proficiency are best taught to read English by first being taught reading in their native language, if teachers and instructional materials in their native language are available.

Thus, while an English-only approach may be effective for some limited-English-proficient children, it is likely to be ineffective for others. I do not oppose special English instructional programs. In fact, about 25 percent of our current federal bilingual funds support this type of instructional approach. What I question is the arbitrary one-year time limit and the demand that only this approach is the right approach to help young people learn English.

The approach taken by Proposition 227 simply ignores the individual needs of each child and certainly is an educational straitjacket for teachers and parents. Good teaching starts with a child's needs and moves the child along in a timely and responsible manner.

By analogy, if we adopted the approach suggested by the Unz Initiative to help children learn to read, it would be a disaster. Some children are already good readers when they come to kindergarten and others learn by the end of the first or second grades. Other children need extra help even in third grade and beyond.

Second, the Unz Amendment limits the discretion of teachers to choose the approach that is best suited for the children they teach. Some children may learn best in an English-only class, others may learn faster in a bilingual class or through some other proven approach, but with the Unz approach, teachers are given no option to use their professional judgement.

Third, Proposition 227 would subject teachers, school board members, and educational administrators to personal liability in litigation by parents if they fail to comply with its requirements. I find this aspect of Proposition 227 both punitive and threatening. This is not the way to build parent-teacher cooperation—a key to student success.

Fourth, the Unz Initiative is a direct attack on local control of education. I am surprised that so many outspoken advocates of local control have chosen not to take issue with this fundamental flaw in the Unz Initiative. The Unz Initiative would not be a helping hand for language instruction, but rather the heavy hand of overregulation. Local flexibility to choose the approaches that work best for their students should not be constrained by a mandate for one approach over the other. I believe that every school district should choose the approach that works best for them based on sound research.

Fifth, the Unz Initiative will in all likelihood result in problems under federal civil rights laws. In the seminal case of *Lau v. Nichols*, the Supreme Court interpreted Title VI of the Civil Rights Act to require school districts to take steps to ensure that national origin minority students with limited English proficiency can effectively participate in the regular educational program.

Similarly, the Equal Educational Opportunity Act requires public educational agencies to overcome language barriers that impede student participation in their instructional programs. Limiting special language development instruction to one year and preventing a school from providing bilingual instruction to students, despite the judgment of teachers and the school

principal that children in that school need bilingual instruction to progress, are likely to result in violations under these laws.

I join all Californians who are unhappy with the status-quo and I understand the frustration that is encouraging many voters to think about voting for the Unz Initiative. But the one-year time limit that is at the very heart of the Unz Initiative is simple, easy to understand, and wrong. Proposition 227 may satisfy people's sense of frustration but ultimately it is counter-productive to our common goal of making sure children learn English while making academic progress in other subjects as well.

I believe that there is a reasonable and positive alternative to the current status-quo and the proposed Unz alternative.

I propose setting a three-year goal to make sure that a child is learning English. Individual differences and circumstances may cause some children to take longer, but a goal of learning English within three years is reasonable. This goal is similar to our goal of making sure that every child learns to read independently by the end of third grade or earlier.

A goal is not a mandate or a command. And a goal is certainly not a one year educational straitjacket that limits the ability of teachers to do what is best for each child. Some children may learn English in one year or two and others may need three years or even more. The focus should be on the individual needs of each child and not on some artificial and arbitrary time frame.

We must do everything possible to make sure children ~~are~~ learn English as quickly as possible even as they continue to make academic progress in other subjects as well. Both goals—learning English and maintaining academic progress in other subjects—are equally important.

I also believe in giving local school districts flexibility to design their own programs contingent on their being accountable for the results. Parents have a right to expect progress. Children should be tested periodically for English proficiency and when a child is falling behind, extra efforts including after-school classes as well as summer school should certainly be considered.

If a school district chooses an approach to teaching English that simply does not achieve positive results for a large number of children, then the school district should have the good sense to fix the problem or use another approach that research shows will work. The focus of every program—be it English-as-a-Second Language, dual language immersion, bilingual education, or English immersion—must be on strengthening quality, regardless of the approach.