

FEDERAL NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY



CRIME

PROMISING FIRST YEAR FOR "OPERATION RESTORE TRUST" INITIATIVE

■(WASHINGTON) Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala marked the first-year anniversary of HHS' anti-fraud initiative, Operation Restore Trust, saying new approaches in the pilot program have already produced \$42.3 million in recoveries. This constitutes a return of \$10 in recoveries for every \$1 spent on the project.

"Operation Restore Trust has pioneered new partnerships within the federal government, new cooperation with states, and new ways of targeting and stopping fraud in the Medicare and Medicaid programs," Secretary Shalala said. "In its first year, Operation Restore Trust has proved its value, and the President wants to extend its reach to every state in the nation."

With first-year targeted demonstration project funds of \$4.09 million, Operation Restore Trust has produced \$42.3 million in restitutions, fines, settlements and recovery of overpayments. This includes \$24.5 million returning to the Medicare Trust Fund from criminal restitutions, fines and recoveries; \$14.1 million returning to the Trust Fund as a result of civil judgments, settlements and penalties; and \$3.7 million returned to the Treasury as a result of services inappropriately billed or medically unnecessary services rendered.

HHS Inspector General June Gibbs Brown said that out of 272 Medicare and Medicaid cases currently under investigation in the three targeted payment areas, 244 are new cases that were opened as a result of the Operation Restore Trust initiative. She said 64 of the cases are joint efforts with other law enforcement agencies.

Operation Restore Trust is focused on five states (New York, Florida, Illinois, Texas, and California) which account for 38.5 percent of Medicaid beneficiaries and 34 percent of Medicare beneficiaries.

The HHS Office of Inspector General, The Health Care Financing Administration and the Administration on Aging are the three agencies within HHS which are jointly carrying out the Operation Restore Trust initiative. The project has also involved an intergovernmental team comprised of federal

and state personnel, including the Department of Justice and the United States Attorneys' offices across the country.

—US DEPT. OF HHS
05/15/96

EDUCATION

PRESIDENT CLINTON & SECRETARY REICH APPLAUD INITIATIVE PROMOTING SCHOOL TO WORK

■(WASHINGTON) President Clinton and Secretary of Labor Robert B. Reich recently recognized the Miss America Organization for its efforts to advance the philosophy and goals of School to Work through a national day of service called "School-to-Work: Miss America in Action."

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act, signed into law by president Clinton in 1994, provides funding for local partnerships involving schools, businesses, labor and community leaders that prepare students for the career challenges of the 21st Century.

"School-to-Work: Miss America in Action" is the focus of a day-long series of events designed to spread awareness of School-to-Work in communities throughout the nation. It is hosted by the reigning Miss America, Shawntel Smith, several former Miss Americas and state title holders from across the country.

—US DEPT. OF LABOR
05/14/96

ENVIRONMENT

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY CORNSTARCH CUTLERY DEMONSTRATED

■(WASHINGTON) There was something new on the menu Thursday in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's cafeteria — but it wasn't something to eat. Cutlery made of environmentally-friendly cornstarch was available in the cafeteria line, part of a one-day demonstration of the cutlery, developed with the help of the USDA.

The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service provided research funds for the cornstarch-based cutlery through special research grants to Michigan State University for Michigan Biotechnology Institute to modify the starch into a thermoplastic product. The utensils are

manufactured by a joint venture between the Institute and Japan Corn Starch, called Evercorn. The water repellent utensils hold up as well as conventional polystyrene knives, forks, and spoons, and are fully biodegradable in a composting system.

These utensils are not yet in the marketplace because they currently do not compete in cost with petroleum-based plastic utensils. However, with growing interest in environmentally friendly products, it is anticipated that there will be demand for these items, which in turn will bring down the cost.

—US DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
05/13/96

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

KEATING, NICKLES: DOLE MADE RIGHT CHOICE

■(GIT) Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating and Senator Don Nickles joined other Republicans from across the nation in supporting Senator Bob Dole's decision to leave his seat in the US Senate and to devote himself full-time to his presidential campaign.

"If Bob Dole wants to be president," Keating told reporters in an impromptu news conference, "then he needs to be out there speaking, talking one-on-one with people and traveling around the country. This was a necessary step for Dole to give viability to his presidential campaign."

The governor, who is the honorary state chair of Dole's campaign, said without the move, the Republican candidate for president was "treading water."

Dole had been expected to give up his post as Senate Majority Leader. His decision to step down from the Senate took many by surprise, including the governor.

"The Senate," Nickles said, "is losing a great legislator, but the nation will be the winner. "Bob Dole has done a remarkable job as majority leader and he will make a remarkable president. This is a bold and courageous move on the part of Senator Dole. He's going to invest everything he's got in this campaign and I like that. It's the right thing to do."

Nickles, ironically, is considered one of the leading candidates to fill Dole's seat as Senate majority leader. Choosing Nickles, the governor said, would be a smart move for Republicans, many of whom consider the

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