

We are also working on an agreement to consider the Legislative Branch appropriations bill. Senators will be notified when votes are scheduled or agreements are reached.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE
CALENDAR—S. 1344

Mr. REID. Madam President, it is my understanding that S. 1344 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1344) to temporarily protect the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to this legislation at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The bill will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY
LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, Americans are insisting that Members of Congress work together on reforms which make health care more affordable and accessible but which don't force people off their current plans or add to an already staggering national debt. Yet the Democratic plan now being rushed through the Senate would do just the opposite. It would force millions of Americans off their health care plans and bury our Nation deeper and deeper in debt.

Democrats have repeatedly and incorrectly declared that under their plan Americans who like their current insurance will be able to keep it. This morning, I would like to explain why that is, unfortunately, not the case.

Just last week, the independent Congressional Budget Office said that the incomplete Democratic HELP Committee proposal would cause 10 million Americans who currently have employer-based insurance to lose that coverage. Let me repeat that. Before the Democratic bill is even complete, we know that it will cause 10 million Americans to lose their health care insurance they currently have. But 10 million would just be the beginning. One key section missing from the HELP bill is the government plan Democrats say they want, and according to one study, 119 million Americans could lose their private coverage if a government plan is enacted.

Here is why this so-called government option would lead to Americans losing their current plans and why it would soon become the only option.

First, a government-run plan would have unlimited access to taxpayer dol-

lars and could operate at a loss indefinitely, which could force private insurers out of business. Private health plans simply wouldn't be able to compete, and millions of Americans could be forced off their health plans whether they like it or not. At that point, people would have to enroll in a government plan or any surviving private health care plan, if they could afford it. I say if they could afford it because another unintended consequence of creating a government plan is that it would cause rates for private health plans to skyrocket, leaving most Americans unable to afford them. They would simply be too expensive. Right now, government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid pay hospitals and doctors less than private insurers do, and hospitals and doctors then pass on the difference to private insurers. If a government plan was established, doctors and hospitals would shift more of their cost onto private health plans, making them even more expensive and making it even harder for them to compete with a government plan. In the end, only the wealthiest would be able to afford private health plans and the kind of care most Americans currently enjoy.

Some say safeguards could be put in place to create a level playing field. But the very nature of the government running a health insurance plan in the private market is the problem. Any safeguard could easily be eliminated, and one look at the government takeovers in the insurance and auto industries shows that when the government is involved, there is really no such thing as a fair playing field.

Let's take a look at the auto industry. The government has given billions of dollars to the financing arms of Chrysler and GM, allowing them to offer interest rates that Ford, a major manufacturer in my State, and other private companies struggle to compete with. This means the only major U.S. automaker that did not take a bailout is at a big disadvantage as it struggles to compete with government-run auto companies. When Ford needed money, it had to raise it in the open market and pay an 8-percent interest rate. But GM could just call up the Treasury—just call up the Treasury—and have them wire over some taxpayer money. No company can compete with that.

So contrary to their claims, if the Democratic plan is enacted, millions of Americans will lose the health insurance they have and that they like. Again, that is not what I say, it is what the Congressional Budget Office says, it is what independent analysts say, it is what America's doctors say, and it is even what President Obama now says. The President now acknowledges that under a government plan, some people might be shifted off of their current insurance.

This isn't the only Democratic claim about health care that is increasingly suspect. Democrats have also promised their health plan will be paid for and

won't add to the deficit. But the facts just don't add up. Right now, just one section—one section—of the HELP bill would spend \$1.3 trillion. It is not plausible that this won't add to the deficit, which has already swelled by more than \$1 trillion thanks to bailouts and the stimulus money.

So when Democrats predict their health care plan won't cause people to lose their current insurance and won't add to the national debt, Americans are certainly right to be skeptical. They made the same kinds of predictions about the stimulus bill. They said the money wouldn't be wasted. Yet we are already hearing about a \$3.4 million turtle tunnel and \$40,000 to pay the salary of someone whose job is to apply for more stimulus money. The administration also predicted that if we passed the stimulus, the unemployment rate wouldn't rise above 8 percent. Now they say unemployment will likely rise to 10 percent.

Americans, indeed, want health care reform, but they do not want a so-called reform that takes away the care they have and stands in the way of their relationships with their doctors or that buries their children and grandchildren deeper and deeper in debt. I think we can do a lot better than that.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. REID. Madam President, one-sixth of every dollar that is spent in America goes to health care today. If we do nothing with health care, by the year 2020 it will be 35 percent. Think about that. That is just 11 years from now. So it is obvious that crushing health care costs leave many families uninsured and underinsured and drive far too many into bankruptcy or foreclosure.

When we discuss our country's health care crisis with our constituents next week when we go home for the July 4th break and when we debate it with our colleagues in this Chamber in the coming months, they will talk about how best to relieve that burden. There are a lot of good ideas, but one of the best ways to bring down the cost is by preventing disease and illness in the first place.

Prevention and wellness are based on a simple premise: The less you get sick today, the less you will have to pay tomorrow. Part of reforming health care means making it easier for Americans to make healthier choices and live healthier lives. We are far from that goal and need to do a better job of making that possible. More than half of all Americans live with at least one chronic condition, and those conditions cause 70 percent of all deaths in America. So doesn't it make sense to stop them before they start? The obvious answer is yes.

It is not just a health issue, it is also an economic issue. Prevention isn't