

up heavy oil in open freshwater, my bill will take that option off the table to ensure that we will not jeopardize our \$7 billion Great Lakes fishing industry. The Pipeline Improvement and Preventing Spills Act is endorsed and supported by a number of groups, including the Michigan League of Conservation Voters; the Pipefitters, Plumbers and HVAC Techs Local 111; Traverse City Tourism; the Great Lakes Fishing Commission; Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association; National Wildlife Federation; and the Alliance for the Great Lakes—to name a few.

The Senate committee on commerce, which has jurisdiction over pipeline safety, will be considering pipeline legislation in the next few weeks. I look forward to building support for provisions in my bill. Our country continues to record record highs in domestic energy production, but we must remain vigilant when it comes to energy transportation. Through strong oversight, leadership from the industry, and technological innovation, I firmly believe that we can and we must continue to meet our energy needs in the safest way possible while preserving treasures such as the Great Lakes for future generations.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROTECTING AFFORDABLE COVERAGE FOR EMPLOYEES ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 1624, which is at the desk, and that the bill be read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of the bill with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1624) to amend title I of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to revise the definition of small employer.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

The bill was ordered to a third reading, and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate on the measure, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 1624) was passed.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words about the Protecting Affordable Coverage For Employees—or PACE—Act.

The PACE Act is smart legislation from my colleague, Senator TIM SCOTT, and my Kentucky colleague over in the House, Congressman BRETT GUTHRIE, that will help protect small- and medium-sized businesses that provide health care to their employees. It would give States more flexibility to define what constitutes a small business for health insurance purposes so as to protect health benefits for workers, lower health premiums, and reduce costs for taxpayers.

So let me repeat that. The PACE Act is a smart health care bill aimed at protecting workers' benefits, lowering premiums, and reducing costs to taxpayers.

I hope colleagues will join me in applauding the bill's lead sponsors, our colleague, Senator TIM SCOTT, and his counterpart over in the House, Congressman BRETT GUTHRIE, for their hard work in developing this very important proposal.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I wish to join the majority leader in complimenting Senator SCOTT, a new Member of the Senate, on a significant accomplishment. It is not that easy to pass a bill in the House and in the Senate. It takes a lot of work, and there is good reason for that. We want to make sure that whatever passes in the Senate has a thorough amount of consideration.

Senator SCOTT has come to the Senate as a member of the HELP Committee. He is one of its most diligent members. I am chairman of that committee. He took this initiative on his own, working with Members of the House, where he formerly served, and he has brought the bill to the Senate, and within a few days he has gotten its unanimous approval. To me, that suggests the kind of U.S. Senator that we need more of—someone who is quiet, effective, scholarly, and gets results.

So TIM SCOTT today, on behalf of the people of South Carolina and this country, has helped workers, has improved benefits, and has lowered premiums. He deserves our thanks. He has certainly earned my respect and the respect of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle by this significant accomplishment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I wish to thank my cosponsor, Senator SHAHEEN, for working with me on the PACE Act, without any question. I also would like to thank Senator ALEXANDER for his kind remarks and specifically thank our leader, Senator MCCONNELL, for making sure this bill had an expeditious path to the floor of the Senate.

So often we hear in America that we can't get things done in the Senate, and because of your leadership, Senator MCCONNELL, and because of the

good work of Congressman GUTHRIE on the House side, as well as Senator SHAHEEN, we see we are going to have an opportunity to make sure that small business owners all across America are not more negatively impacted by ObamaCare.

The decision we have made today to move this legislation forward actually will save, on average, about 18 percent—18 percent—of higher premiums that will not have to be paid by small businesses owners.

Senator MCCONNELL, thank you for your leadership. Senator ALEXANDER, thank you for working with us on this very interesting process to get it to the floor as expeditiously as we have been able to do.

With that, I thank both Senators for their hard work and dedication to this issue.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I want to thank my friend and colleague Senator SCOTT for his leadership in protecting many Americans and small businesses from more needless suffering under ObamaCare. While I am glad for this outcome, a piecemeal approach to this terrible law is less valuable than a strategic approach. We must help the millions of other victims who are already suffering or will soon suffer from the law's flawed policies but lack an effective lobbying voice. In the future, we should set the stage for a serious repeal and replace debate by delaying Obamacare's onerous burdens, rather than merely working to make a terrible law 12 percent less bad.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016—CONFERENCE REPORT—Continued

REMEMBERING OFFICER GREG ALIA

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I rise to speak about one of South Carolina's most amazing heroes, Greg Alia. I am here today to recognize that this young man—32 years young—lost his life yesterday. Yesterday morning, Officer Greg Alia was killed in Columbia, SC.

I will tell my colleagues that Greg served his community with distinction. Yesterday afternoon, I had an opportunity to talk with Greg's wife, Kassy. Kassy's strength, as she spoke with someone she has never met about the love of her life—about her husband, the father of her little boy, Sal—was quite remarkable. Her thoughtfulness in this tragic time truly struck a chord with me and brought tears to my eyes as I listened to a wife describe the man she loves, a community leader, and someone who runs into danger when others are running away from danger.

Greg was born and raised in Columbia, SC. He was a Columbia native. He went to high school at Richland Northeast High School. He graduated from the University of South Carolina. If Greg were here, I would say "Go, Cocks" because we understand and appreciate the importance of the University of South Carolina, especially in the Columbia footprint.