

care plans very quickly and you will have an increase in the number of uninsured that will be in the millions. You will also have costs. CBO estimated that the Democrat bill would increase health care costs by 4 percent over what they are already estimated to cost, at 5.2 percent. That is a 9.2 percent cost increase if we enact the Democrat bill. That would cause millions of people to lose health insurance. I don't think that is smart.

So I want to just make sure that our colleagues are aware of the fact that we are willing to have a significant, credible debate. We are willing to consider various alternatives. We are not willing to get an unlimited amount of time. Earlier, my colleague had offered his bill on an appropriations bill. I said it didn't belong there. Maybe we should have left it there. We could have offered some substitutes.

One way or another, we are going to take up this issue. It is our intention to take it up prior to the August break. That is the majority leader's call. We understand that we have a lot of appropriations bills to do, and that must be done. I know my colleagues on the Transportation Committee are ready to go to work. I won't delay them much longer. We will have adequate time to debate the pros and cons of this bill.

I heard some other allegations—that they don't do anything. The Senator from Delaware said, "They have all this lip service. They provide for emergency care, gag clauses, and access, direct access to OB/GYN and pediatricians, but that doesn't do anything." I disagree. We protect the unprotected. We don't have the philosophy that we should preempt States who are, in many cases, doing a better job than the Federal Government. There is a presumption on the Democrat side that the Federal Government can do it better than State government. Let's protect the unprotected, cover the plans that don't have protections often by the State.

My State has 24 mandates. They have a lot of things that aren't in the Democrat plan or Republican plan, and they are doing quite well. They are considering many more. Most States are looking at the Patients' Bill of Rights, and 36 States have already enacted several others, and 45 States already have a gag clause. Maybe some people think Washington, DC, should decide what kind of communication should or should not be made by physicians, and so on.

My point is, I think we have tried to craft a very careful, balanced, good proposal that won't escalate costs, that won't have undue mandates. The Democrat proposal has 359 mandates. Maybe instead of calling it the Kennedy bill, the Patients' Bill of Rights, they should call it the Kennedy bill of mandates, because it is this idea that the Government in Washington, DC, should dictate everything.

So I look forward to the debate. I look forward to resolving this issue and

trying to come up with a good, responsible bill that won't drive up health care costs, that won't add layers and layers of bureaucracy and regulation and red tape, that won't really deter quality health care.

Our bill, I might mention, has a lot of things to deal with improving quality health care. I compliment Senator COLLINS, Senator FRIST, Senator JEFFORDS, and others who worked to put a lot of quality provisions in this health care, whether you are dealing with women's health, or dealing with research, trying to get research out to States and rural areas that would really improve quality health care—not a Federal definition that we know best, but trying to really advance technology and get that information to patients, to various areas around the country that would actually improve the quality of health care in America today.

I thank my colleagues who are managing this bill. I hope they will have success in moving this bill forward. I look forward to the debate and, hopefully, a debate next week on the so-called Patients' Bill of Rights.

Mr. JEFFORDS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 3 minutes as in morning business.

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

THE ZAAZHOA CASE

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I rise today to share some great news and to give thanks to the Members who helped me with respect to this very emotional situation that we have dealt with. I want to share the great news that three young Vermont girls who were abducted to Egypt are now back. I want to thank 56 of my colleagues for their support in this case for signing a letter to urge their return to Vermont. I also want to thank the Egyptian and American Governments for their invaluable assistance.

Last October, anticipating a Vermont court order giving his wife sole custody of their three girls, Michael Zaazhoa took Sarah, Maryam and Leila under falsified passports and fled to Egypt. Lamis Zaazhoa began the frantic search for her girls, ages 3, 5 and 6, which took 9 months, and culminated in a joyful reunion at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo this past Friday.

Lamis listened to the wise counsel of her family and decided to go the long, anxious route of petitioning the Egyptian courts for sole custody of her children under Egyptian law and getting an Egyptian court order for the return of her girls. The Vermont delegation quickly swung into action in support of her efforts, enlisting the help of the U.S. Embassy in Cairo and the Egyptian Embassy in Washington.

After the Egyptian courts ruled squarely in Lamis's favor, I walked

around the Senate floor with a letter from Senator LEAHY and me to President Mubarak of Egypt, asking for his support. Fifty-five of my Colleagues signed this letter. I am deeply appreciative of my Colleagues help, which I consider pivotal to the success of our efforts. And I am very grateful to the Egyptian Embassy and Egyptian Government for its help in ensuring that Egyptian law was enforced and the girls were returned to their mother. The staff of the American Embassy was there for us all along, and arranged the swift return to the United States of Lamis and her girls once they were reunited.

I wish I could have invited all of my colleagues to the wonderful meeting Senator LEAHY and I had with these three sweet girls yesterday! Their beautiful smiles and the joy on Lamis's face deeply touched the hearts of all those present. In difficult situations like these, we rely on the good offices of our Government, and the cooperation of our friends in foreign governments. And yesterday we saw with our own eyes the beautiful fruits of those efforts!

This is an unusual result. Many of these cases occur, but very, very few are reconciled the way this was. I thank Jeff Munger of my staff in Vermont, whose sister brought to his attention the plight of the children and spearheaded the results that we got. So, again, I thank all the Members for their helpfulness in getting the three little girls back to Vermont.

I thank the Chair.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. 2307, the transportation appropriations bill.

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

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2307) making appropriations for the Department of Transportation and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, in putting together the Fiscal Year 1999 Transportation Appropriations bill, we were faced with the difficulty of trying to adhere to the spending levels in the new highway and transit authorization bill and still provide adequate levels of funding for other transportation priorities. We have done that in this bill, and I think it represents a balanced approach to meeting our nation's transportation needs. I want to thank the Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations Senator STEVENS, for all his assistance and advice as we put this bill together and moved it through sub and full committee consideration.

We have also worked diligently with the senior Senator from New Jersey,