

in building stable and enduring structures for cooperative regional security.

In the face of such threats as North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, Japan, in partnership with the United States, has also sought to reinvigorate its security profile in the region. Japan's efforts to develop a more capable Self-Defense Forces, as well as the Prime Minister's elevation of the Japan Defense Agency to a Ministry, are, in my view, both to be welcomed as signs of a "normal" Japan, able and willing to play a leading and responsible role in the region.

The U.S.-Japan alliance must remain at the core of efforts to revitalize Japan's role in ensuring stability and security in the region. One key aspect of this effort is the realignment of forces currently in Japan, making certain that America's ability to respond to threats in the region is not diminished.

Japan has shown that it is not only playing a responsible leadership role in its own region, but globally as well.

The occasion of the Prime Minister's visit provides an opportunity for the people of the United States to express our deep appreciation to Japan for its contributions to our efforts to combat al-Qaeda and other international terrorist organizations. In Afghanistan, Japan has donated over \$1 billion in development funds to rebuild vital infrastructure precisely the sort of effort to transform the environment in Afghanistan that will be key to defeating al-Qaeda and the Taliban. And Japan has provided critical support—often unseen—in multilateral efforts to thwart the growth of terrorist organizations in Southeast Asia.

Japan has also proved to be an invaluable partner in providing humanitarian response and relief in the Southeast Asia. Japan joined with the United States in responding to the tragic December 2005 tsunami, and has worked with others across the region to develop an effective tsunami early warning system.

And Japan has worked with the United States and others in the international community to develop the infrastructure and institutions we need in order to face new transnational challenges like the threat of avian influenza. Also, although Japan's foreign assistance level declined earlier in the decade, as part of the 2005 G8 global development discussions, Japan announced it would increase foreign aid by \$10 billion in aggregate over the next 5 years, and double its assistance to Africa over the next 3 years.

With newspaper headlines that remind us on a daily basis of the risk the planet faces from climate change, we must also recognize the critical leadership role in the international community that Japan has played on environmental issues and climate change. The Kyoto Protocol, which was negotiated in Japan's ancient capital of Kyoto in 1997, has now been ratified by over 160 nations.

Japan has also played a key role in forging the Asia-Pacific Partnership on

Clean Development and Climate, through which the U.S., Japan, and others in the region seek to marshal the scientific and technical expertise needed to develop cleaner and more efficient technologies and bring about a carbon-neutral Asia-Pacific region without sacrificing economic growth.

As the world's second-largest economy, Japan is a vital source of growth and dynamism for the rest of the world. In this regard, the reemergence of Japan from its "lost decade" of virtually no economic growth is a most welcome development.

There is nonetheless still more Japan can do at home to improve the structure of its economy, from removing regulations that stifle business competition and innovation to further develop Tokyo as a global financial market. And the Japanese economy is still not open enough to imports in key sectors or to foreign direct investment. The United States has an interest in seeing Japan address these challenges so that the Japanese economy can continue to play a leading role in sustaining global economic growth.

Although not without its challenges—as is natural in any normal bilateral relationship—the United States and Japan today have a strong and deep relationship and the basis for close cooperation and partnership which will allow us to work together to meet the challenges of the decades ahead.

But I would be remiss in my duties as a friend of Japan if I did not note that for Japan to be able to play a leading role in Asia and be perceived by its neighbors as a "normal" nation it must deal forthrightly with its history. It is important for Japan to face these issues fully, openly, and honestly. A Japan that is mindful of its past can and should play a leading role in Asia's future.

So let me, in turn, close with some thoughts on the future of the U.S.-Japan relationship.

First, I believe that it is important for Americans, so used to a close partnership with Japan, to embrace the complex realities of a Japan that is a "normal nation"—one that has its own identity, vision, and goals. Such a Japan should be welcomed by the United States as a true partner and friend, even while understanding that it may mean that there will be differences on certain issues.

Given the new regional realities, United States can no longer take managing the U.S.-Japan alliance for granted.

Second, although the U.S.-Japan relationship remains the centerpiece of both U.S. and Japanese policy in the Asia-Pacific region, in recent years the Bush administration has let its attention to this critical relationship drift as it has been distracted by other issues.

The alliance demands, and is deserving of, close political cooperation and coordination at every level, reflecting

the key role Japan plays as an anchor of U.S. economic and security interests in the region and across the globe.

Third, recognizing the important role that Japan now plays around the globe—on peacekeeping, economic development, global warming and new transnational threats—I believe the time has long since passed for Japan to have a role commensurate with its responsibilities, including in the U.N. Security Council.

The visit of Prime Minister Abe provides us an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the U.S.-Japan partnership, with the same spirit that has governed our relations for over 60 years. America benefits greatly from a close and productive partnership with a Japan that is confident about its future and willing and able to play a leading role in creating a peaceful and prosperous Asia.

STATE-BASED HEALTH CARE REFORM ACT

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, there is a crisis facing our country, a crisis that directly affects the lives of over 45 million people in the United States, and that indirectly affects many more. The crisis is the lack of universal health insurance in America, and its effects are rippling through our families, our communities, and our economy. It is the No. 1 issue that I hear about in Wisconsin, and it is the No. 1 issue for many Americans. Nevertheless, the issue has been largely ignored in the Halls of Congress. We sit idle, locked in a stalemate, refusing to give this life-threatening problem its due attention. We need a way to break that deadlock, and that is why I have introduced a bill with the Senator from South Carolina, LINDSEY GRAHAM, that will do just that—the State-Based Health Care Reform Act.

Senator GRAHAM and I are from opposite ends of the political spectrum, we are from different areas of the country, and we have different views on health care. But we agree that something needs to be done about health care in our country. Every day, all over our Nation, Americans suffer from medical conditions that cause them pain and even change they way they lead their lives. Every one of us has either experienced this personally or through a family member suffering from cancer, Alzheimer's, diabetes, genetic disorders, mental illness or some other condition. The disease takes its toll on both individuals and families, as trips to the hospital for treatments such as chemotherapy test the strength of the person and the family affected. This is an incredibly difficult situation for anyone. But for the uninsured and underinsured, the suffering goes beyond physical discomfort. These Americans bear the additional burden of wondering where the next dollar for their health care bills will come from; worries of going into debt; worries of going bankrupt because of health care needs.

When illness strikes families, the last thing they should have to think about is money, but for many in our country, this is a persistent burden that causes additional stress and hopelessness when they are ill.

It is difficult to do justice to the magnitude of the uninsurance problem, but I want to share a few astounding statistics. Forty-seven percent of the uninsured avoided seeking care in 2003 due to the cost. Thirty-five percent needed care but did not get it. Thirty-seven percent did not fill a prescription because of cost. The uninsured are seven times more likely to seek care in an emergency room. They are less likely to receive preventative care because they cannot afford to see the doctor, and they are more likely to die as a result. Each year, at least 18,000 people die prematurely in this country because of uninsurance. If the uninsured had access to continuous health coverage, a reduction in mortality of 5 percent to 15 percent could be achieved.

The United States is the only industrialized nation that does not guarantee health care for its citizens. In other countries, if someone is sick, they get proper care regardless of ability to pay. In our country, that is not the case. It is unacceptable for a nation as great as America to not provide good health care for all our citizens. We are failing those in need. We are failing the hard-working family that cannot afford the insurance offered to them. We are failing the uninsured children whose parents do not have any access to insurance. We are failing low-income Americans and middle-income Americans alike. This is not right. We can do better.

Even for those Americans who currently have health insurance through their employer, the risk of becoming uninsured is very real. Large businesses are finding themselves less competitive in the global market because of skyrocketing health care costs. Small businesses are finding it difficult to offer insurance to employees while staying competitive in their own communities. Our health care system has failed to keep costs in check, and there is simply no way we can expect businesses to keep up. More and more, employers are forced to increase employee cost-sharing or to offer subpar benefits, or no benefits at all. Employers cannot be the sole provider of health care when these costs are rising faster than inflation.

I travel to each of Wisconsin's 72 counties every year to hold townhall meetings. Almost every year, the No. 1 issue raised at these listening sessions is the same—health care. The failure of our health care system brings people to these meetings in droves. These people used to think government involvement was a terrible idea, but not anymore. Now they come armed with their frustration, their anger, and their desperation, and they tell me that their businesses and their lives are being destroyed by health care costs, and they want the government to step in.

I am pleased to be joined by Senator GRAHAM in introducing the State-Based Health Care Reform Act. In short, this bill establishes a pilot project to provide states with the resources needed to implement universal health care reform. The bill does not dictate what kind of reform the States should implement, it just provides an incentive for action, provided the states meet certain minimum coverage and low-income requirements.

Even though Senator GRAHAM and I support different methods of health care reform, we both agree that this legislation presents a viable solution to the logjam preventing reform. I have long said that a single-payer health care system is what I prefer for our country. Senator GRAHAM would like to see health care privatized and see a base, catastrophic coverage offered to everyone. Despite our disagreements about the form that health care reform should take, we agree on this legislation.

This bipartisan legislation harnesses the talent and ingenuity of Americans to come up with new solutions. This approach takes advantage of America's greatest resources—the mind power and creativity of the American people—to move our country toward the goal of a working health care system with universal coverage. With help from the Federal Government, States will be able to try new ways of covering all their residents, and our political logjam around health care will begin to loosen.

Over the years I have heard many different proposals for how we should change the health care system in this country. Some propose using tax incentives as a way to expand access to health care. Others think the best approach is to expand public programs. Some feel a national single payer health care system is the only way to go. We need to consider all of these as we address our broken health care system.

Under our proposal, States can be creative in the state resources they use to expand health care coverage. For example, a state can use personal or employer mandates for coverage, use State tax incentives, create a single-payer system or even join with neighboring States to offer a regional health care plan. The proposals are subject only to the approval of the newly created Health Care Coverage Task Force, which will be composed of health care experts, consumers, and representatives from groups affected by health care reform. This task force will be responsible for choosing viable state projects and ensuring that the projects are effective. The task force will also help the States develop projects, and will continue a dialogue with the States in order to facilitate a good relationship between the State and Federal Governments.

The task force is also charged with making sure that the State plans meet certain minimal requirements. First,

the State plans must include specific target dates for decreasing the number of uninsured, and must also identify a set of minimum benefits for every covered individual. These benefits must be comparable to health insurance offered to Federal employees. Second, the State plans must include a mechanism to guarantee that the insurance is affordable. Americans should not go broke trying to keep healthy, and health care reform should ensure that individual costs are manageable. The State-Based Health Care Reform Act bases affordability on income.

Another provision in this legislation requires that the States contribute to paying for their new health care programs. The Federal Government will provide matching funds based on enhanced FMAP—the same standard used for SCHIP—and will then provide an additional 5 percent. States that can afford to provide more are encouraged to, but the matching requirement will ensure the financial viability of the bill and state buy-in. Other than these requirements, the states largely have flexibility to design a plan that works best for their respective residents. The possibilities for reform are wide open.

One of the main criticisms of Federal Government spending on health care is that it is expensive and increases the deficit. My legislation is fully offset, ensuring that it will not increase the deficit. The bill doesn't avoid making the tough budget choices that need to be made if we are going to pay for health care reform.

One of the offsets in the bill was proposed by the Congressional Budget Office: an increase in the flat rebate paid by drug manufacturers for Medicaid prescription drugs. Currently, Medicaid recoups a portion of its drug spending through a rebate paid by the manufacturer. The savings mechanism would set a flat rebate, and provide funding for the States' health care reform projects. Another offset in the bill, also proposed by the Congressional Budget Office, is reduced subsidies for Medicare Part D prescription drug benefits for the highest income seniors. This would impact only single retirees earning more than \$80,000 per year and married retirees earning more than \$160,000—less than 5 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries.

Additional funding for the bill comes from the President's fiscal year 2007 budget proposal to extend the authority of the Federal Communications Commission to auction the radio spectrum and the authority of Customs and Border Protection to collect multiple different conveyance and passenger user fees through fiscal year 2016. My bill proposes similar extensions of these established authorities. Also, my bill proposes to both simplify and reduce the Federal subsidy of airline passenger screening costs by replacing the current variable fee, which is capped at \$5 per one-way trip, with a flat \$5 fee. This proposal is similar to one in the president's fiscal year 2007 budget and

would decrease Federal subsidies to about 30 percent of passenger security costs, without reducing aviation security spending.

We can say that it is time to move toward universal coverage, but it is empty rhetoric without a feasible plan. I believe that this is the way to make universal coverage work in this country. Universal coverage doesn't mean that we have to copy a system already in place in another country. We can harness our Nation's creativity and entrepreneurial spirit to design a system that is uniquely American. Universal coverage doesn't have to be defined by what's been attempted in the past. What universal coverage does mean is providing a solution for a broken system where millions are uninsured, and where businesses and Americans are struggling under the burden of health care costs.

It has been over 10 years since the last serious debate over health care reform was killed by special interests and the soft money contributions they used to corrupt the legislative process. The legislative landscape is now much different. Soft money can no longer be used to set the agenda, and businesses and workers are crying out as never before for Congress to do something about the country's health care crisis.

We are fortunate to live in a country that has been abundantly blessed with democracy and wealth, and yet there are those in our society whose daily health struggles overshadow these blessings. That is an injustice, but it is one we can and must address. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane." It is long past time for Congress to heed these words and end this terrible inequality. I urge my colleagues to support the State-Based Health Care Reform Act.

COMMEMORATING GREEN MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, 75 years ago today, President Herbert Hoover signed a proclamation officially establishing the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont.

This was the result of significant effort on the part of the State of Vermont and several of the State's leading conservationists and legislators of the time. While a number of Vermonters had proposed a national forest in the State just after the turn of the 20th century, it took a sustained effort over the next three decades for this vision to become a reality.

In 1925, the Vermont General Assembly passed the enabling act to allow the Forest Service to purchase land in Vermont. Many would argue just 2 years later that the devastating impact of the 1927 flood showed the need for sound forest management practices in the Green Mountains. It was fitting that the initial land purchases for the southern half of Vermont's national

forest were from the estate of Marshall J. Hapgood, who, years earlier, had advocated for a National Forest in the Green Mountains. Hapgood was a practitioner of scientific forestry on his own lands and saw the value of a sustainable timber resource and watershed protection.

From that initial Hapgood acquisition of just over 1,000 acres, the Green Mountain National Forest has grown to more than 400,000 acres today, and it includes in the northern half of the forest many of the lands conserved by another conservation pioneer, Joseph Battell.

The Green Mountain National Forest today is fulfilling the vision of those early forestland stewards by protecting watersheds, providing forest products, forest management demonstration and recreational opportunities. The Green Mountain forest hosts segments of the Long and Appalachian Trails, alpine ski areas, several wilderness areas and two national recreation areas, one of which is now named in honor of our late colleague, Robert T. Stafford.

As one of Vermont's Senators, I am proud to have been able to play a role in the growth of the national forest in my State, in both land area and with its facilities. I am also grateful to the dedicated, professional staff of the Green Mountain National Forest who recently completed the new land and resource management plan for the forest and who were particularly helpful to the congressional delegation during our recent wilderness deliberations.

As we celebrate its 75th anniversary, we are also proud that the Green Mountain National Forest will be providing the 2007 Capitol Christmas tree for the National Mall, and the companion trees for many of our public buildings in Washington a tangible example of how the Green Mountain National Forest is being shared by all Americans.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNITION OF DR. MARY STRANAHAN

• Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Dr. Mary Stranahan. Dr. Stranahan is a retired medical doctor and an active philanthropist who lives in Arlee, MT. Arlee is a small town in western Montana located on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Lake County. Arlee is a place of incredible physical beauty, like so many places in Montana. But amid the beauty are poverty and economic challenges. Lake County ranks as one of the poorest counties in Montana. In her years as a practicing family physician in Lake County and on the reservation, Mary saw first-hand the relationship between limited economic opportunity and family health.

Since retiring from medicine, Dr. Stranahan has become immersed in the survival and success of local agri-

culture and mainstreet businesses. She knows agriculture and small business play a vital role in healthy rural communities. Over the years, Dr. Stranahan has, as a concerned individual, been a core donor for innumerable charities and non-profits in Montana.

But this year Dr. Stranahan is taking her philanthropic commitment to a whole new level in chartering the Montana Good Works Foundation. This new Montana foundation will work to focus Dr. Stranahan's grants and donations on social justice, rural community development, and sustainable business development in Montana.

In one of the Montana Good Works Foundation's first gifts, Dr. Stranahan has shown extraordinary leadership by giving \$1.42 million to the Montana Community Development Corporation. This gift kicks off MCDC's campaign to grow its loan fund for Montana businesses to \$15 million and it empowers MCDC to expand its business coaching services.

Dr. Stranahan has further committed to help Montana Community Development Corporation recruit more philanthropists to this important effort to build entrepreneurship in Montana.

I commend Dr. Stranahan for her great leadership in rural philanthropy. The Big Sky Institute reports that rural States like Montana are on the short end of a great disparity in foundation grant-making. The Big Sky Institute found that, adjusting for population, foundation grants to rural States are less than a fifth of the national average. After adjusting for population, foundation grants to rural States are less than a tenth of the amount received in the State of New York.

Last May, I spoke to the annual conference of the Council on Foundations in Pittsburgh, PA. I challenged foundations to double their grant-making to rural States within 5 years. And I am working with leaders in the nonprofit and foundations communities to convene a rural philanthropy conference in Missoula this August. I am proud of the progress we are making in rural philanthropy. And I look forward to working together with Montana philanthropists like Dr. Stranahan to keep the ball rolling.

I applaud Dr. Stranahan for the vision and the scope of her philanthropy. In particular, I commend her commitment to building rural entrepreneurs as a core philanthropic strategy. Dr. Stranahan is one of the new Montana leaders who are showing the world that Montana truly deserves its designation as the Treasure State.

I recognize and commend Dr. Mary Stranahan for her substantial efforts on behalf of Montana's communities and Montana's future.●

HONORING THE LIFE OF FRED OCHI

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I note the passing of a most distinguished and