

the country. It is incomprehensible, it is intolerable, and it is unacceptable.

Democrats pleaded with Members of the Republican Party to give us their help and their support so we could pass this legislation. Now we have that opportunity. The ball is in our court. We can do something about it. This is a defining issue, not only about children but also about the values of this country. So I hope Democrats and Republicans alike will come together and say children ought to come first in the United States.

This is a value issue, it is a family issue, and it is something that demands action, and I hope we will override this veto.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, how much time is remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 7½ minutes remaining.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask to be yielded 3 minutes and to give the remaining time to the Senator from Washington after I have completed.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is a strange thing when the President of the United States uses his veto pen. He does it so rarely. He has only used it on two issues. Once, when we tried to change the policy on the war in Iraq and tried to bring our troops home in a responsible manner, the President vetoed it. The second was on stem cell research. When we tried to open up this opportunity for medical research to save lives and spare suffering for American families, the President vetoed it—not once but twice. Today, the President used his veto pen for the fourth time. Unlike other vetoes, there were no television cameras, no reporters, no announcements made. Quietly, in his office, the President signed the veto of the children's health insurance measure.

This children's health insurance measure is a program that has been in business for 10 years. It is a successful program, and it has strong bipartisan support in Congress. We started this program because 15 million kids in America did not have health insurance. They were not the poorest kids. The poorest kids have coverage under Medicaid. They were not the fortunate children, those who were lucky enough to have health insurance through their parents. They were the ones caught in the middle, the kids of working parents who make such a low wage and have so few benefits they cannot provide health insurance for their kids.

So when President Bush vetoed this bill, why did he veto it? In a short, one-sentence statement he said: It was a middle-class entitlement.

I would say to the President: Isn't it about time someone stood up for the middle class in this country? To argue that a couple making \$60,000 a year, without health insurance where they go to work, can spend \$800 or \$900 a

month on health insurance and not feel that pain in their budget tells me the President or his advisers are out of touch with America.

When I go home to Illinois, and our colleagues go home to their States, the first thing you hear about is health insurance. You know what it is—people say: We don't have it where we work, and we cannot afford to buy it. We have health insurance, but it doesn't cover enough. Those are the realities of family life in America, and the President's veto today tells me he is out of touch with the real issues challenging middle-class working families in America.

Fortunately, we have put together a bipartisan bill. With the leadership of Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY of Iowa and ORRIN HATCH of Utah on the Republican side, MAX BAUCUS on the Democrat side, and Senator KENNEDY of Massachusetts, we have a compromise bipartisan bill. It is paid for. It does not add to the deficit. A tobacco tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products will pay for health insurance, so we will move from 6.6 million kids covered to 10 million kids, over 5 years, moving toward the goal of all children in America having health insurance.

The President's veto today tells me he doesn't share our goal that every American, every family, should have health insurance that they can count on and afford. It tells me the President is not in touch with the real life of middle-class working families struggling to make ends meet, struggling to pay for college, struggling to make sure their kids have health insurance.

This is an opportunity for Congress to come together, the House and the Senate on a bipartisan basis, to say to the President: Pay close attention to America. America needs a helping hand, and working-class, middle-class families need an opportunity for health insurance that they can afford for their children.

I urge my colleagues on both sides, let's continue this effort on behalf of these families to provide affordable health insurance for kids across our Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, how much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There remains 3½ minutes.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, the President is turning a deaf ear to the crying needs of millions of American children by vetoing the Children's Health Insurance Program. The President claims this is an inefficient use of Federal dollars, but nothing could be further from the truth. When a family goes without health insurance, it means going without regular checkups, children missing more school than other children, and children waiting until the emergency room is the only answer.

It means we don't catch ailments like ear infections and cavities and dia-

betes and asthma. It means treatable conditions are more likely to spiral out of control. And it means American taxpayers are spending billions of dollars for uncompensated care instead of spending money up front to provide continuity of care.

It is not more efficient to veto this bill. With better coverage, we can treat things like fevers and injuries and infections before they turn into something far worse. We can catch chronic illnesses earlier and help children manage their conditions. We can save American taxpayers' dollars.

But the President is turning a deaf ear to over 3.8 million Americans who simply cannot afford health insurance. How could they? Mr. President, are your budget analysts just numb to the fact that Americans are seeing higher and higher costs of health insurance? Are you choosing to ignore the fact that health insurance premiums grew by 78 percent since 2001, while wages only grew 19 percent? Are you choosing to ignore that nearly half of the increase of uninsured children in America in the last several years occurred among those between 200 percent and 400 percent of the poverty line? That means more Americans are falling into the category of not being able to cover health insurance.

Are you ignoring the fact that record numbers of businesses are dropping health insurance for their employees? That means a family with \$41,000 trying to find health insurance could end up having to pay 30 percent of their annual income. What American family can afford to pay 30 percent of their income to find health insurance? American families are being squeezed out of health insurance, and the President of the United States is turning a deaf ear to the crying health care needs of our children. All we are doing is paying the bill later.

The President should not be so heartless when it comes to the children of America. I know my colleagues are working shoulder to shoulder, Democrats and Republicans, trying to stop the President's veto. I hope my colleagues in the House of Representatives will have the courage to stand up to the President. But be assured that Republicans and Democrats in the Senate will continue this measure in whatever ways we can on behalf of America's children.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.