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That is what they said. And it continues:

GOP anticipates a struggle over which amendments are debated and eventually fingerpointing over blame for demise of the bill. The bottom line is that the GOP very much wants to engage in it for a prolonged period, and then make it as difficult as possible to move off the bill.

The focus is much more on making political points than on amending the bill.

The American people aren't confused, Mr. President.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### MEDICARE IMPROVEMENT FOR PATIENTS AND PROVIDERS ACT OF 2008—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 3101, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S. 3101, a bill to amend titles XVIII and XIX of the Social Security Act to extend expiring provisions under the Medicare program, to improve beneficiary access to preventive and mental health services, to enhance low-income benefit programs, and to maintain access to care in rural areas, including pharmacy access, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I have come to speak on the Medicare bill, but I must make a few remarks in relation to the debate between the majority and the minority leaders. The bottom line is very simple, and that is they haven't said let's fight over what amendments nor have they offered amendments. They have said that we will not even proceed to the bill.

So when the majority leader, Senator REID, says it is Orwellian, of course it is. In every instance when the minority has come and said they will do amendments related to the specifics of the issue at hand, the majority leader has been more than accommodating, rankling even some on our side. But they don't want to do that.

Senator REID read the memo. They want to slow the bill down with extraneous amendments that have nothing to do with energy because they do not want to allow a vote, even on ANWR.

Now, my friend from Kentucky talks about ANWR as the answer. Even the most optimistic experts say it will be 7 years before we get a drop of that oil. So the minority leader and the minority are saying wait 7 years and maybe we will get oil prices down. We don't want to wait that long. In 7 years, we could have an energy policy that weans us away in part from fossil fuels in a serious and significant way, like what is being done in Europe and other

places. They do not want to do that because big oil dominates. They do not want to do that because their base says drill in ANWR, and the people say no.

This idea that we don't want any production, the minority leader is just patently incorrect. Democrats, including myself, helped lead the charge and voted to increase production in the east gulf. That is the place where there is the most available oil and gas near refineries. And it wouldn't take 7 years the way starting a whole new venture in Alaska would. We voted for it under Republican leadership, when the Republicans led. So we are willing to increase production, but we do believe we are not going to drill our way out of this problem.

The majority leader is exactly right. The actions of the minority leader say: Don't even debate it. Then he says they want to debate it. Well, if you want to debate it, don't block the motion to proceed. And I am certain—though I haven't talked to the majority leader about this, but I will, and I know from his past actions—if they have a series of amendments that are related to energy, they will be entertained. But if they want to debate George Bush's tax cuts or the estate tax, well, the majority leader has a perfect right to say, don't do it.

So, Mr. President, again, this week in the Senate, Republicans are blocking lower energy costs. They are the party of no—no, no, no. They are the party of no on global warming, they are the party of no on lower energy costs, they are the party of no on tax help for solar and wind, and they are the party of no on preventing the oil companies from just doing everything they want. And as the majority leader said, the status quo is not what America wants, but the status quo is exactly what the minority, the Republicans, are standing for.

I said it yesterday, and I will say it again—I said in the DSCC that I care more about the substance. I would much rather we move forward. But as head of the DSCC, the minority is filibustering themselves right out of their seats. When three-quarters of Americans demand dramatic change, and the minority says no change, that is not a formula for political success. You don't have to be a political genius to know it.

So I would say to the rank-and-file members on the other side, I don't understand the logic, I don't understand the thinking, but you are sure not helping yourself or helping your country.

Now, Mr. President, I would like to talk about Medicare for a minute—that is the bill we are on—and I rise to speak in strong support of the Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act of 2008. I want to congratulate our leader on the Finance Committee, Chairman Max Baucus, for introducing this much needed legislation.

When Lyndon Johnson signed Medicare into law in 1965, he promised it

would transform the lives of America's senior citizens, and he said this:

No longer will older Americans be denied the healing miracle of modern medicine. No longer will illness crush and destroy the savings that they have so carefully put away over a lifetime so that they might enjoy dignity in their later years.

No one could have said it better, and yet 40 years later we are at a critical moment. Do we make much needed improvements to the program to allow it to fulfill its promise to America's seniors or do we ignore this challenge?

We have worked hard in the Finance Committee to put together fair and reasonable legislation that is supported by all physicians groups and millions of beneficiaries. We have compromised. I don't believe Medicare Advantage should come out of medical education. It affects my State, the majority of it will, and I am still willing to sort of suck it in and say, OK. But some on the other side are saying no, it has to be all their way. We know that fee for service in Medicare Advantage is far more lucrative and far more spread around the country. Yet we don't have very much of that in here to help pay for the other necessary increases. But it is a compromise bill. It is a bipartisan bill with broad support on the Finance Committee, and I urge all Members to vote for cloture today so we can provide help to millions of America's seniors and the hard-working health care providers who treat them.

We have to pass this bill to avoid catastrophic cuts to doctors. We know these physicians face a 10-percent cut. To those who say, well, they are doctors, they can afford it, the trouble is, if we do this cut, lots of doctors don't take Medicare, and our poor senior citizens are left in the lurch. When we cut resources to doctors, patients lose, in this instance. So we need to put aside politics and do the right thing for our seniors and pass this bill.

Some Members seem to think that doing more for low-income seniors—those Americans who are trying to make ends meet and are deciding between filling their car's tank with \$4 gas and paying for a doctor's visit—is wrong. Opponents of this measure say now is not the time to improve Medicare. Well, I say now is exactly the time. We need to cut costs where we can and enhance the program where it is needed.

Our constituents are waiting for action. In my State of New York, the AARP dropped off 20,000 petitions in three wheelbarrows at my office in Albany. These 20,000 petitions were from New Yorkers asking Congress to pass this bill, to pass S. 3101, because it helps seniors on fixed incomes, establishes an e-prescribing requirement, and helps limit premium increases.

We are particularly pleased the bill emphasizes preventive health care and expands coverage for key screenings, which can catch problems before they become more serious, and many other important measures.