

these shortcomings, I cannot understand how these high-risk pools could be the bedrock of the Republican position when it comes to health care reform.

Some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle also want to allow insurers to choose which State insurance regulations they want to live by. Proponents say this is a way to let all insurers sell insurance nationwide. But if you follow this, you know that doesn't work. Without State regulation and basic State requirements on coverage, there is no guarantee of solvency and no guarantee of coverage when you get sick.

If enacted, these changes would move our system in the wrong direction. Instead of pooling people together, those who are well and those who are sick, to spread the risk, Republicans would have us separate the healthy from those who are not healthy. Instead of helping people with chronic diseases, they are pushed over into high-risk pools with high premiums.

The whole point of expanding health coverage is to make sure you have access to quality, affordable insurance. Changes to our health insurance system that make health insurance cheaper for some but more expensive for others is hardly a solution. We need to create large purchasing pools and offer a wide range of plans. Change the rules for setting premiums so that health costs are shared more broadly between the healthy and the sick. We need to provide a tax credit to businesses that step up and say: We believe the health of our employees is as important as the money we pay them. We are going to make a sacrifice in our profit taking so that our coverage extends to not only the owners of the company but the employees. That kind of good, responsible civic conduct should be rewarded in our Tax Code.

I am glad we are starting to discuss health care reform again. Nothing is going to happen under this President. We are going to have to just count the days until January 20, 2009, when this President leaves office and another President comes to office, and the American people will then have a real chance for real change.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

OIL PRICES

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, within the span of 1 week, the Senate missed three opportunities to engage in productive debate on how we can combat the rising price of oil, and alleviate the dangerous emission of greenhouse gases that contribute to global climate change. It is highly regrettable that we have missed these opportunities, especially when it comes at the expense of improving the Nation's welfare.

Americans are working harder, yet finding that their paychecks are not keeping up with inflation. Many are finding it difficult to pay their mortgages, health care expenses, and other daily needs. While relief, for some, is expected this July from an increase in

the national minimum wage, more must be done to improve the lives of working families. Unfortunately, it has been difficult to work with this administration to make any meaningful changes that would assist working families.

On June 10, the Senate was blocked in its attempt to further debate two bills offering legislative solutions to rising oil prices and our reliance on foreign oil. One of them, the Consumer-First Energy Act of 2008, would have put consumers' concerns before those of the oil companies, by holding the companies accountable for price gouging and profit taking.

Families do not need to be reminded that rising oil prices contribute heavily to their rising bills for energy, transportation, shopping and groceries. These families, for the most part, have not had a corresponding increase in their wages. They find themselves in difficult financial positions, and having to make tough choices on what necessities to spend their money on. This strain is even more evident in my home State of Hawaii.

Hawaii depends on imported oil to supply more than 90 percent of our energy needs. The record-high crude oil prices cause higher processing charges for food and other manufactured items. The increase in cost for Hawaii's foods is due in large part to the higher cost of transporting the goods to the islands—80 percent of Hawaii's food products are imported via ship or airplane. Grocery prices have seen their biggest increase in nearly two decades.

Furthermore, the high cost of jet fuel results in higher airfare prices and reduction in flights significantly limit travel for Hawaii residents and tourists. The reduction in visitors traveling to Hawaii could hurt our economy. While the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau is proactively working to aggressively resuscitate the market, the hotel occupancy in April hit a 5-year low. The city of Honolulu is considering raising taxi meter fares in light of record gas prices and the downturn in tourism.

The administration must work with us to help our families and our communities by finding a way to decrease fuel prices. In addition, we must search for ways to reduce our dependence on oil. It is necessary that we continue to debate our energy future and enact appropriate reforms.

Meaningful debates on three significant bills were unfortunately curtailed, despite the agreement of many members that we must do something about increasing oil prices, our reliance on foreign oil, and the need for cleaner energy. The aforementioned Consumer-First Energy Act of 2008, the Renewable Energy and Job Creation Act of 2008, and the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act of 2008, would have helped the Nation move forward by continuing to invest in renewable and sustainable energy. Finding a solution should not be a partisan issue. Encour-

aging the development of renewable energy technologies will play a critical role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and our Nation's reliance on fossil fuels. In Hawaii, we are mindful of preserving natural and cultural resources. We are also aware of the powerful potential of nature to provide sustainable sources of energy.

I am proud that we had bipartisan support for the Marine and Hydrokinetic Renewable Energy Promotion Act of 2007, which I introduced, and was later enacted into law as part of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007. This measure recognized that ocean and wave energy are viable sources of sustainable energy. We need to support marine renewable energy research and development of technologies to produce electric power from ocean waves. However, like many other tax credits for renewable energy, the incentives put in place to ensure robust investments will expire at the end of 2008. The Renewable Energy and Job Creation Act of 2008 would have extended these valuable credits.

By harnessing the Sun, wind, ocean, and geothermal power to generate electricity, Hawaii is trying to reduce our heavy reliance imported fuel and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. The vast ocean, Sun, wind, and land are natural elements that we, as a nation, share and enjoy. We must do all that we can to encourage the development and production of renewable and sustainable energy technologies from these natural resources. Achieving our goals will only be possible if we approach the problem as responsible stewards of our environment. Together, we will make an impact.

I am committed to finding legislative solutions to ease the burden of increasing oil prices and to reduce greenhouse gases. As responsible stewards, we must do what we can to uphold the welfare of our environment and our Nation for the generations to come. An investment in the development and implementation of renewable energies is a significant part of the solution. I stand ready to work with others to enact legislation to address these concerns.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

MAJOR SCOTT HAGERTY

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to a very special person, one of our fallen heroes, MAJ Scott Hagerty. I feel a very personal relationship with this man. As we all do when we hear of a tragic loss, we research and see what he was doing,

where he was. It is almost impossible to conceive of the idea that maybe I didn't even meet him personally because, in looking at where he was in Afghanistan and when he was there, where he was in Iraq and when he was there—I was there at the same time. Ironically, even in northern Uganda. Not many people even know where Uganda is, but in a minute I will share a few things that are going on there and what Scott Hagerty was doing.

Scott died on June 3, 2008. He gave his last full measure when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle while he was on patrol in Zormat, Afghanistan. Scott was a member of the Army Reserve and was assigned to the 451st Civil Affairs Battalion, Pasadena, TX.

Born and raised in Oklahoma, Scott graduated from Stillwater High School in 1984. As a senior in high school, he joined the U.S. Army at the rank of a specialist. He earned a bachelor's degree in political science, pre-law, and international relations from Oklahoma State University—OSU—in 1993.

He received his commission through the ROTC program and then completed the Field Artillery Officer Basic Course at Fort Sill. After serving on active duty, he continued his service in the Army Reserve. He spent 11 years with the 291st Regiment in Oklahoma before transferring to the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command, Airborne, in 2004.

Scott married his wife, Daphne, 12 years ago. They have two sons, Jonathan 10 years old and Samuel 21 months. Scott loved his family and enjoyed being a father. He spent his life helping others gain the same freedoms and experience the same joys that he had.

Scott was deployed for a 12 month tour in South Korea and then served in Iraq from October 2004 to August 2005. As a civil affairs officer, he worked with Iraqis and Iraqi civilian authorities in helping them rebuild their government and country.

Prior to his tour in Afghanistan, Scott spent a tour in Djibouti, Africa, to help promote stability and prevent conflict in the region. His mission included repairing wells in northern Uganda, where he and fellow soldiers restored more than 60 wells and provided 250,000 local residents with clean water. In Africa, he was also involved in providing suitable facilities for basic medical care for children.

This is the part I find very interesting and coincidental. Scott was involved in northern Uganda. In northern Uganda, there are some things that are going on that not many are aware of. There is the LRA, the Lord's Resistance Army. One individual—his name is Joseph Coney. Joseph Coney, for 30 years, has mutilated and tortured little kids, recruited them to be in the army as his boy soldiers—12, 13, 14 years old. If they refuse to do it, they make this individual go back and murder his own family, back in the villages. I have

been there. I have been in the same villages, the same places where Scott was.

Scott didn't have to do this. This is something that was beyond the call of duty. It is heavy lifting. I saw a picture of him in an orphanage in northern Uganda. I have been to that same orphanage. There are not many of our troops who have done what Scott Hagerty has done. He wrote about his experience there saying:

I have always dreamed of being a soldier, even as a little boy, so I know I am doing the job that was destined for me.

He deployed to Afghanistan shortly after being assigned to the 451st Civil Affairs Battalion in February. His family said, "Scott was very proud of his career in the Army, and we know he died doing what he loved . . . serving his country."

Scott received numerous military honors, including two Meritorious Service Medals, six Army Achievement Medals, two National Defense Service Medals, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary and Service Medals and a Korean Defense Service Medal.

I am saddened by the loss of my fellow Oklahoman. I am proud of his service, integrity, and commitment to our country. I read through some of the comments written in Scott's on-line Guest Book from people who knew him at different points in his life and I would like to share a couple with you:

I had the honor of serving with Maj Hagerty in Gardez, Afghanistan. He was a father figure to me. I have great respect for him. He is truly my hero and will be missed more than he knows. I know he is looking down and watching over us as we continue our mission. We love you Maj Hagerty and will never forget you.

The Highland Park family are mourning the loss of a wonderful parent at our school. Scott was not only a devoted soldier, but a devoted husband and father . . . Scott's presence will be missed at home and abroad. Thank you Scott! We are very proud of you! Highland Park Elementary School.

Another one: Growing up with Scott, I was impressed by his quiet strength. I always knew there would be great things in his future as we stumbled toward adulthood . . . Thank you for the sacrifice you have made for my family.

And lastly a comment left by his team that he worked with in Africa: Sincere condolences to the family of Maj Scott Hagerty from the present and third Civil Affairs team in northern Uganda. We only had e-mail contact with him, giving updates on how things were going here, as he was still interested—he was the first team leader here and broke a lot of ground. I am sure he stands guard over us all now.

Today I pay tribute to Scott, a man who exemplified integrity and courage and gave his life as a sacrifice for his family and our Nation.

I have to say this in the case of Scott: This is not goodbye, Scott. It is job well done. We love you, and we will see you later.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I would like to comment on the kindness

of the Senator from Oklahoma. I think that so often we forget the sacrifice that our American people have made so we could bring some stability to Afghanistan and to Iraq.

Now, 2 weeks ago I attended a service actually on the front steps of the Ohio Capitol Building where we commemorated the lives of 23 individuals from the Lima Company that was extraordinarily hit in Iraq. Tears rolled out of my eyes and everyone else there as a mother of a man by the name of Hoffman talked about her son and the sacrifice that he made and why he made that sacrifice.

I think that too many Americans are not aware of the fact that we have lost over 4,000 people in Iraq and that 30,000 of them have returned, and half of them are going to be disabled. I think it underscores that we need to be very responsible in our future activity in Iraq so that the parents of those young men and women do not feel that their lives were lost in vain.

I am sure, Mr. President, you have mixed emotions, as I have, about where we should be going there. I heard Jim Dobbins today. Jim was at the State Department for many years. He was talking about our next moves in Iraq and how difficult it is because on one hand, we know that we have to move our troops out of there for the benefit of our volunteer Army. Because of the deployments, they are stretched, and they are not getting the re-ups that they need.

At the same time, we want to make sure we do not move too fast so we end up with a civil war there. So it is a dilemma. But the people who get lost in all of that are the folks who have lost their loved ones. And it grieves me that we have spent almost \$650 billion on that war, and we have never asked the American people to participate.

The only ones who have participated are the families whose sons and daughters have come back in body bags, and that loss will be with them for the rest of their lives. So I think all of us ought to think about those families and pray for them and pray that those of us in responsible positions will be enlightened by the Holy Spirit to make the right decisions for them, their families, for our country, and for the world.

TRIBUTE TO SECOND BLUEGRASS CHAPTER HONOR FLIGHT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the second Bluegrass Chapter Honor Flight. I had the privilege of meeting 38 World War II veterans from the Commonwealth of Kentucky who arrived in our Nation's Capital yesterday morning to see the memorial on the National Mall dedicated to them.

Thanks to the national nonprofit organization, Honor Flight, which transports World War II veterans from anywhere in the country to see their memorial, and a group of dedicated volunteers, veterans from all over the state