

In his Senate confirmation hearing, DOE Secretary Steven Chu said:

Nuclear power . . . is going to be an important part of the energy mix. It is 20 percent of our electricity generated today, but it is 70 percent of the carbon-free portion of electricity today. And it is baseload. So I think it is very important that we push ahead.

For that reason and every other reason, for the economy and for the environment and for our ability to provide our own energy in this country and lower our reliance upon foreign countries, I believe we need to move forward rapidly. We intend to do so with nuclear energy.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent that all time in morning business be yielded back.

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

Morning business is closed.

FAMILY SMOKING PREVENTION AND TOBACCO CONTROL ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 1256, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A motion to proceed to the bill (H.R. 1256) to protect the public health by providing the Food and Drug Administration with certain authority to regulate tobacco products, to amend title 5, United States Code, to make certain modifications in the Thrift Savings Plan, the Civil Service Retirement System, and the Federal Employees' Retirement System, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, a bill that will finally give the Food and Drug Administration the authority to regulate tobacco products.

This was the first bill for which I had the honor of voting in my new role as a member of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee—the newest member—but it is the result of years of tireless effort by members of this committee and by their staffs. I especially commend its primary sponsor, our chairman, TED KENNEDY, who has long been committed to protecting our Nation's children from the dangers of tobacco and nicotine addiction, and Senator DODD, who is so ably leading that fight in his stead today. I thank them and our colleagues in the House for the efforts that have brought us this bill before the Senate today.

This legislation is long overdue and very much needed. Just last month, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit unani-

mously upheld the decision of the district court that the tobacco companies had engaged in racketeering. The court found that for at least 50 years, the companies have knowingly kept information from the American public about the health and safety risks of their products and that they continue to do so today. These companies have worked together to deceive the American public and cannot be trusted to regulate themselves.

As generations of customers died from illnesses related to smoking, the tobacco companies have kept their profits up by marketing their products to children through cartoon advertisements, candy flavorings, and sports sponsorships. Public health advocates, lawmakers, prosecutors, and family members who have lost loved ones to the ravages of smoking have attempted to take on the tobacco companies, but they confronted a coordinated effort backed by billions of dollars to protect this deadly business.

In the next year, 400,000 Americans will die from smoking-related illness and more than 450,000 children will become daily smokers. Every day, 3,500 kids pick up a cigarette for the first time.

Even those who do not smoke still pay a price—\$96 billion each year in public and private health expenditures to treat illness caused by smoking. The companies will, of course, point to concessions and payouts over the years, but it is clearly not enough. As we work to reform our broken health care system, we cannot ignore this public health menace.

That is why it is vital that we finally pass this legislation. The FDA is the agency most prepared to take on the regulatory, scientific, and public health challenges created by tobacco products. This carefully crafted compromise bill gives FDA the tools necessary to take on the tobacco companies in three major areas: advertising and sales to young people, the composition of cigarettes, and representations of health effects of tobacco products.

We have wasted too much time fighting the same battles over the same issues for years. This legislation finally enacts tough but constitutionally sound regulations on advertising targeted toward young people. It puts a warning label on every pack of cigarettes that covers 50 percent of each side of the package. The companies will finally have to disclose the content of tobacco products, and FDA will have the authority to regulate hazardous ingredients. Tobacco product manufacturers will no longer be able to make unsubstantiated claims about their products—FDA will have to verify any health claim based on its impact on the population as a whole in order to protect tobacco users and potential tobacco users. This will be paid for by the tobacco product manufacturers and importers themselves, taking no resources away from the FDA's other vital missions.

So many of us have been touched by the ravages of smoking and lost family and friends. Yet we still see too many young people become addicted to cigarettes or pick up the newest smokeless tobacco product without knowing the real risks to their health. We cannot leave this to court settlements or to the industry itself. We have been waiting for 50 years, and the evidence shows we are still being deceived. Regulation is long past due. This bipartisan bill, with the support of over 1,000 public health, faith, education, and children's organizations, is the best opportunity to help protect our children from the menace of tobacco. We have delayed long enough.

I again thank Chairman KENNEDY, Senator DODD, and my colleagues on the HELP Committee for their hard work bringing this bill to the floor and getting us closer than any other point in the long history of this legislation to finally seeing the effective regulation of tobacco products.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CRAIG THOMAS RURAL HOSPITAL AND PROVIDER EQUITY ACT

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I rise today to again pay tribute to one of the Senate's finest: our colleague, the late Craig Thomas from Wyoming. Two years ago this week, the Senate lost a steady hand and a man who did much for his State of Wyoming. Craig was dependable in the finest sense of the word. He defined the word "dependable." He was the epitome of a workhorse, not a show horse.

On a personal note, for many Senators, why, Craig was not only a colleague but a dear friend. I will cherish that always. Craig was also a fellow marine. In this case, Semper Fidelis—always faithful—is most appropriate. If anyone faced trouble in their life, the one person you would want by your side would be Craig Thomas.

This is why I am proud and honored again to join with my colleagues KENT CONRAD and TOM HARKIN, and with the new Senator from Wyoming, JOHN BARRASSO, and the distinguished Senator from Utah, ORRIN HATCH, to introduce the Senate Rural Health Caucus bill in honor of Senator Thomas. The bill we are introducing is the Craig Thomas Rural Hospital and Provider Equity Act, with emphasis on the "equity."

The people of Wyoming and all of Craig's colleagues knew he fought for rural America and always put the needs of his State above all else. On the health care front, why, Craig was truly