

is about the small businesses that have to lay off employees because they cannot afford skyrocketing health care payments. It is about small businesses that have to eliminate health insurance because they cannot afford it. It is about the three in five families who put off necessary medical care because it costs too much.

American families in every one of our States are counting on us to work together in our common interests. They are not counting the political points scored by either party. Senate Democrats want nothing more than to work with Republicans to create a bipartisan health reform bill that ensures quality and affordable help for all Americans. That is why the HELP Committee has held 14 bipartisan roundtables, 13 committee hearings, and 20 meetings of committee members to discuss various proposals—each one with the goal of reaching a bipartisan agreement. Hard-working Americans are too often casualties of our health care system. They deserve better than to also be the casualties of this kind of politics.

It is not too late for Republicans to join us for a serious discussion and sincere dialog about how to move this country forward. As I did at the beginning of this year, this Congress, this debate, and this week, I still have hope they will.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE WEEK IV, DAY II

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Secretary of Health and Human Services recently said that when it comes to health care, the status quo is unacceptable, and I agree with her. She then went on to say that there are a lot of people on Capitol Hill who are content with doing nothing, though she didn't name names. On that point, I totally disagree. Republicans and Democrats all share the belief that health care reform is needed. The question is what kind of reform it should be.

Some have proposed a government-run health care system that would force millions to give up the private health plans they have and like and replace them with a government plan where care is denied, delayed, and rationed. This so-called "reform" is not the kind of change Americans want. They want health care that is more affordable and accessible, but that preserves the doctor-patient relationship and the quality of care they now enjoy.

And that is why Republicans are proposing reforms to make health care less expensive and easier to obtain without destroying what's good about our system. Republicans want to reform our medical liability laws to discourage junk lawsuits and bring down the cost of care; we want to encourage

wellness and prevention programs that have been successful in cutting costs; we want to encourage competition in the private insurance market to make care more affordable and accessible; and we want to address the needs of small businesses without creating new taxes that kill jobs. But instead of embracing these commonsense ideas that Americans support, Democrats in Congress are trying to rush through a health care bill that will not only lead to a government-run system, but will do so by spending trillions of dollars and plunging our country deeper and deeper into debt.

Recently, the independent Congressional Budget Office told us that just one—just one—section of the bill being discussed in the HELP Committee would spend \$1.3 trillion over a decade. And Senator GREGG, the ranking member on the Budget Committee, estimates the HELP bill could end up spending more than \$2 trillion—more than \$2 trillion on a bill that would not even solve the entire problem.

The American people don't want us to spend trillions of dollars we don't have on a health care system they don't want. And yet that is exactly what Democrats plan to do, even though they can't explain to anyone how they will pay for it. Despite the staggering costs of the Democrat health care plan, we're being told we need to rush it through the Congress for the sake of the economy. When Republicans ask how Democrats are going to pay for it, or what impact it will have on our health care system and the economy, the only words we hear are rush and spend, rush and spend.

We heard similar warnings earlier this year when Democrats pushed through their stimulus bill, and voted on it less than 24 hours after all of the details were made public. Well, if the American people learned anything from the stimulus, it is that we should be suspicious when we are told that we need to spend trillions of dollars without having the proper time to review how the money will be spent or what effect it will or will not have.

Democrats also said the stimulus money wouldn't be wasted and that they would keep track of every penny spent. Yet already we are learning about outrageous projects like a \$3.4 million turtle tunnel that is 13 feet long or more than \$40,000 being spent to pay the salary of someone whose job is to apply for more stimulus money.

The administration also predicted that if we passed the stimulus, the unemployment rate wouldn't exceed 8 percent. But just last week, the President said that unemployment would likely rise to 10 percent.

So when Democrats now predict that their health care plan will cut costs, Americans should be skeptical. And they have good reason to be, since independent estimates show that every health care proposal Democrats have offered would only hurt the economy.

Americans should also be skeptical when it comes to Democrat promises

that people will be able to keep their current insurance. Just last week, the independent Congressional Budget Office said that just one section of the HELP Bill will cause 10 million people with employer-based insurance to lose the coverage they have. And that is even before we have seen a finished product. The bill is still missing significant sections, such as a government plan that Democrats want, which could force millions more to lose their current coverage.

The stimulus showed that when politicians in Washington say the sky is going to fall unless Congress approves trillions of dollars right away, we should be wary. Yet just a few months later, Americans are hearing the same thing from Democrats in the health care debate: rush and spend, rush and spend. Americans want health care reform, but they want the right health care reform. They want us to take the time and care necessary to get it right. And that is why the Democrats' rush and spend strategy is exactly the wrong approach.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and the majority controlling the next 30 minutes.

The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today, the HELP Committee will meet to discuss another new government program that seeks to promote prevention and wellness. While prevention and wellness are important and can lead to lower overall health care costs, we already have several programs focused on prevention and wellness.

The HHS Fiscal year 2010 budget request for prevention is \$700 million. In the recent omnibus approps bill there were \$22 million worth of earmarks for legislators' pet projects for prevention and wellness, and \$310.5 million worth of earmarks under the Health Resources and Services Administration. Yet the health care bill proposed by the majority includes \$80 billion new spending on new prevention programs without even acknowledging the existing programs or suggesting improvements to them. In other words, wellness and fitness has become another trough to put both feet in for earmarks and pet projects of members.