

I reflected back 9 years ago to my maiden speech. And, interestingly, at that time—I think it was about 6 weeks after I had been here, so it was the middle of February 2001—I spoke on the budget and the fact that we had a surplus, and how we wanted to keep that surplus and not go into deficit, a lot of the same themes the new Senator from Florida has sounded here today.

Of course, your maiden speech in this August body is quite memorable. I did not have the luxury, as the new Senator from Florida has, to have a number of his colleagues sitting here. As a matter of fact, it was an empty Chamber for this Senator save for the Presiding Officer. But in the course of this speech, I mentioned that it was my maiden speech. I am proceeding on. All of a sudden the doors, these side doors, swing open, and in strides the senior Senator from West Virginia, the person who is a walking political history book. He assumes his position in this chair right here. I get through with my remarks, and he says: "Will the Senator from Florida yield?"

I said: "Of course I yield to the senior Senator from West Virginia."

He proceeds to give, off the top of his head, a history of the Senate maiden speeches. And, of course, what a memorable event that was for this Senator in his maiden speech, and it will be equally a memorable event for the new Senator from Florida. I join our colleagues in congratulating him on his maiden speech.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 469 and the Senate resuming legislative session, the Senate then proceed to vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 1776.

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

The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

#### HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, as you well know, being one of the freshmen Senators, along with me and a number of others of us, we have been coming to the floor for the past several weeks to talk about the need to address health care reform.

We are here again this morning for the next hour to talk about why this is so imperative. I am going to yield my time, about 5 minutes initially to Senator WARNER, who has another engagement and needs to be off. So at this point I yield 5 minutes to Senator WARNER.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, the Senator from New Hampshire, for leading the freshmen Senators here this morning as we once again take the floor to talk about health care reform.

I also commend my friend, the junior Senator from Florida, for his comments today. I share his views about the necessity of bringing our Federal deficit in line.

In the Commonwealth of Virginia, we have a balanced budget requirement and we meet our budget every year. I am proud of the fact that Virginia has been named the best managed State in America. So I do have to take issue with some of the comments made by my colleagues, who I think understand States' needs. The fastest growing costs in my State, as well as the State of Colorado, New Hampshire, and I would assume the State of Florida, are health care costs.

Medicaid is going to bankrupt virtually every State in the Nation by 2025 if we do not act. I hope for, and welcome, my colleagues' efforts to try to reach a bipartisan consensus on health care reform.

I will again make the point I have made repeatedly over the last few weeks: What happens if we don't act? What happens if we simply kick the can down the road another 10 years? That is the appeal I make to my colleagues on the other side. Join us. Particularly join the freshmen Senators, who don't come to the Senate with the same background of the last 20 years and experience of past battles. Join a group who does, however, come to this body wanting to do the people's business. That means driving down health care costs, expanding coverage, and making sure our health care system is financially sustainable.

If we don't act, not only will States' increasing Medicaid costs go unmet, State budgets will not be balanced. If we don't act, the Federal deficit will explode. The largest driver of the deficit is not the TARP spending or stimulus spending; it is health care spending. If we don't act, the current Medicare Program, which seniors depend on, will go bankrupt by 2017. That is not a political statement; that is a fact.

If we don't act, American companies will not be competitive in the global economy. We have the most productive workforce in the world. But no American company can compete when they have built in health care costs of \$3,000 to \$4,000 more per worker than any other competitor in the world. If we don't act, for the 65 percent of us who get our health care coverage through the private insurance market, an average Virginia family will be paying 40 percent of their disposable income on health insurance premiums within the next decade.

I ask my colleague from Florida and others on the other side of the aisle to join us in this bipartisan effort to reform health care. This morning we will lay out how we think health care reform can both expand coverage and drive down costs. We will look at some of the models currently being used by large employers who have had the flexibility to design their own benefit plans. These models have successfully

driven down costs by putting in place prevention and wellness activities, negotiating better prices with providers, and restructuring a financial incentive system which currently rewards hospitals based on higher readmission rates, rather than quality care.

I thank the Senator from New Hampshire for organizing the freshmen one more time. As a former Governor, I know she has been a leader on issues like Medicaid and health care costs. I call on my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to actually join in this effort to make sure we do achieve bipartisan health care reform.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I thank the Senator from Virginia for his comments. As he said, our health care system is on an unsustainable path. Now is the time to fix it.

Health care has not been working for families, for workers, for businesses, and for the Nation's economy. Today we are actually going to talk about some of the good news we know we can accomplish with health care reform. We are going to talk about what health care reform can do to help those families, workers, and the economy. It is our opportunity to control costs for Americans and to improve quality.

Let me be clear: We can control cost and improve quality at the same time. When we do this, we have to remember to keep patients at the center of the debate. The truth is, in so many cases the health care industry can do more for less. Usually I like to tell a story about what is going on with my constituents. It helps us keep people at the center of the debate.

Today I want to talk about some of the innovative health quality initiatives happening in New Hampshire. We all know hospital readmissions are a costly problem in the country. We have an exciting program going on in Manchester, the State's largest city, at the Elliot Senior Health Center. They recognized what was happening with readmissions. They recognized that hospital discharges can be confusing and sometimes overwhelming for seniors and that providing a little extra attention to help those seniors as they are transitioning out of the hospital can help keep them from being readmitted. They developed a program they call the TRACE Program. TRACE provides seniors with a health coach who helps patients with the tools and support to take a more active role in managing their medical care. The support those patients receive improves their understanding not only of their own health care, of the health care system in general, it helps keep them out of the hospital.

Senator COLLINS and I have introduced a bill that would help do this systemwide called the Medicare Transitional Care Act. It builds on successful programs such as the one at the Elliot Senior Health Center. Our legislation would improve the quality of care, reduce hospital readmissions, and