

we have rationing? A lot of committees have tried to say that there would not be any rationing coming from this, and that was in the original House bill. But as it is put together as one final package, as it is here, that section, unfortunately, was dropped. In other words, the prohibition on rationing is not in this bill.

This is what the latest House bill proposes: more taxes, more spending, higher premiums, fewer choices, a government-run plan, the biggest Medicaid expansion in history, unsustainable new entitlement programs, and 2,000 pages.

Despite all the promises, the facts don't lie. The House bill and the HELP Committee bill I referred to during these remarks represent an unprecedented government takeover of our Nation's health care system—a takeover that this country cannot afford, and a takeover that the American people don't want.

I thank my colleagues for giving me this time beyond the hour of 4, when the unemployment compensation bill was to be taken up, so I could keep another obligation.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION EXTENSION ACT OF 2009

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY). Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3548, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3548) to amend the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2008, to provide for the temporary availability of certain additional emergency unemployment compensation, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid (for Baucus/Reid) amendment No. 2712, in the nature of a substitute.

Reid amendment No. 2713 (to amendment No. 2712), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 2714 (to amendment No. 2713), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 2715 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 2712), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 2716 (to amendment No. 2715), of a perfecting nature.

Reid motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Finance, with instructions to report back forthwith, with Reid amendment No. 2717, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 2718 (to the instructions (amendment No. 2717) of the motion to commit), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 2719 (to amendment No. 2718), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana is recognized.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I yield to the Senator from Illinois such time as he desires.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank the chairman of the Finance Com-

mittee. He will be discussing a matter of grave importance in Illinois and all across the Nation, the extension of unemployment benefits, which we have been trying to bring to the floor for 27 days. Our Republican colleagues have opposed it, stopped it, delayed it, and demanded every vote they can think of to stop the extension of unemployment benefits, even though there are millions of Americans out of work and desperately looking for jobs. Many of them have exhausted their family savings trying to avoid foreclosure, to feed their families, and they need these benefits desperately. But we have been held up time and again because several Republican Senators have insisted on amendments that have nothing to do with unemployment and nothing or little to do with the economy. I hope today we can break through that. I hope we can find bipartisan support to extend the unemployment benefits.

I thank the Senator from Montana for yielding a moment to me.

I wish to respond to my friend—and he is my friend—my colleague, Senator GRASSLEY of Iowa, my neighboring State. He and I have worked on many things together. Our political views differ, that is for sure, but I believe he is a hard-working, good representative of his State. In fact, when I said that once on the floor, he ended up quoting it in one of his campaign brochures, which got me in trouble with the Iowa Democratic Party. But so be it. I like him, and I hope he feels the same.

We have worked together on many issues, but for the Senator from Iowa to come to the floor and be critical of a bill saying it is too many pages—that is what I have heard over and over again from the Republican side. They have argued that health care reform in the Senate is going to run over 1,000 pages in length, and they say it over and over again.

I don't know historically what major legislation considered on the Senate floor is comprised in the number of pages, but we have had some pretty big bills in the past—in the Senate Appropriations Committee and other places—because those bills take on big issues and big subjects. Nothing is bigger than our health care system in America. To talk about 1,000 pages really does not do justice to the enormity of the task we are tackling, to try to bring costs under control so people and businesses across America have secure and stable health care.

We ought to make sure as well that the health insurance companies stop exploiting those who have health insurance policies. We want to eliminate preexisting conditions as an exclusion. We want to make sure when you are sick, your health care will be there; that when you change jobs, you can take your health care with you. We want to make sure your children are covered for longer periods of time than they are now under current law. It takes a few pages to put that together. You cannot put it in a few sentences if

you want to change the law and make it work.

So to come here and criticize the bill which has not been presented in a final form as I stand here I don't think makes a very strong case.

I asked the other day for the Republicans to tell me how many pages their health care reform bill is. The Senator from Tennessee said they were working on several different bills but they would be shorter in length. The closest we can come to the Republican health care reform bill I hold in my hand. It is 2½ pages long, and it consists of a press release from MITCH MCCONNELL, the Senate Republican leader. That is as far as the Republicans have gone in writing health care reform for the American people. It is a press release. In this press release, there are no positive things they stand for, only criticisms of our efforts to write a health care reform bill.

To my right is the Senator from Montana, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. He has spent the better part of a year—at least a year—trying to put together a health care bill. He has engaged others in trying to bring them into this conversation. Unfortunately, at the end of the day, only one Republican Senator, Ms. SNOWE of Maine, joined Senate Democrats in voting for health care reforms. So far, she is the only Republican in the House or the Senate who has voted for health care reform even at the committee level. The Republicans have been standing on the sidelines while we have been trying our best to put together good legislation which will bring the cost of health care down, protect those beneficiaries who are denied coverage under their health insurance plans, and extend the reach of competition and choice so more Americans have places to turn. When the Senator from Iowa complains about so-called rationing, I think he overstates the case.

We know there is too much money spent on the current health care system. There is duplication, waste, and fraud, and we want it to come to an end. If Medicare is going to be on sound financial footing, if we can say to seniors today and for years to come that they can count on Medicare being there when they need it, we have to cut out unnecessary spending.

One of the areas in that particular program that is highly controversial is called Medicare Advantage.

Medicare Advantage was proposed by the insurance industry. They said years ago: The government has tried to run Medicare for 40 years, but they haven't done a very good job. Why don't you let the private insurance companies offer a Medicare plan. We will show you what you can do when you use the genius of the insurance industry in America to offer Medicare.

We took them up on their challenge and said to them: Present the insurance policy to seniors that will provide Medicare benefits.