

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of the health care reform legislation. The first hour will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees. The majority will control the first 30 minutes and the Republicans will control the next 30 minutes. We expect a vote in relation to the Hutchison motion to commit today, and the Sanders amendment. It is my understanding Senator SANDERS will offer his amendment at around 11 o'clock today. They will both be pending. Senators will be notified as to when any votes are scheduled.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we continue making progress toward making it possible for every American to afford to live a healthy life. Senators continue to work together toward that goal because even though we may have differences of opinion on the details, we all share the strong belief in the differences we can make for the American people as it relates to their being healthy.

We all know our current system is beyond broken, and we know the citizens of this country demand that we fix it. We know this because they tell us—in letters, in phone calls, and visits we have at home, and we have not been going home very much, but certainly when we are able to get there. Those who oppose making health insurance more affordable and making health insurance companies more accountable would like you to believe that is not the case. But that is only propaganda by the insurance industry.

They want you to think the American people are happy when these greedy insurance companies deny health care to the sick and take away their coverage at the exact moment they need it the most.

They would like you to believe the American people do not mind hearing a

multibillion-dollar company tell them: I am sorry you have diabetes. I am sorry you have a heart condition. But, also, it hurts my bottom line, so you are on your own.

These insurance companies and health care deliverers want you to believe that women gladly pay more than they should for the screenings they have to catch breast cancer, that men gladly pay more than they should to have the test to catch prostate cancer, and that seniors gladly pay much more than they should to get their prescription drugs.

Those who are trying to slow the Senate—and really the country—and stop reform want you to believe the American people do not mind paying hidden taxes to cover the uninsured, they do not mind the waste and fraud rampant in the health care system, and they do not mind losing their health insurance if they lose their job. But, simply, that is not true. That is not the case.

The people we represent—whether it is New Mexico, Montana; we have two from New Mexico, we have one from Michigan, one from Kentucky, Oklahoma—it does not matter what State you represent; there are stories.

Listen to what Mike Tracy, who lives in north Las Vegas, NV, said. His 26-year-old son has been an insulin-dependent diabetic since he was a baby. The insurance Mike's son gets through work will not cover his treatments, and the Tracys cannot afford to buy more coverage on their own.

But this family's troubles are about more than just money. Since they could not afford to treat their son's diabetes, it developed into something called Addison's disease—a disease that President Kennedy had. If you have money, you can treat the disease. If you do not, it is a very bad disease, likely could be fatal.

This is what Mike wrote me this past Friday.

I don't know what to pray for first: that I will die before my son will so I don't have to bear the burden, or that I outlive him so I can provide support to his family when he is gone.

This should not be a choice for any American, and when given the chance to help people such as Mike, our choice should be easy.

Here is another example: Ellen O'Rourke wrote to me last Tuesday about her friends, the Hidalgos, who live in Incline Village, NV, a town on the shores of Lake Tahoe. The Hidalgos' 2-year-old daughter Lexie Mae has a cancer of the eye that could cost her vision or her life.

Lexie Mae's parents do not have health insurance and are counting on friends to help pay for their daughter's mounting medical bills. They are also counting on us to lower the cost of health care so they can afford their own. They work hard. They want health insurance. They cannot get it.

Another letter I got last week was from Elizabeth Parsons. She teaches

music at an elementary school in Reno and volunteers after school at a dance and drama theater in town. She is 60 years old and wanted to retire at the end of this school year. But as she wrote me last Thursday.

Unfortunately that plan has been postponed indefinitely for one reason only:

“one reason”—

I can't afford to retire because of the skyrocketing increases in [my] health insurance.

Ms. Parsons has done a lot for her community. Now her country's leaders should do something for her: We should make sure her decision about whether to retire doesn't hinge on how expensive it is to keep her insurance.

A man named Walt Cousineau from Elko wrote me last Monday to tell me about his wife. She had a heart attack three Decembers ago. Health insurance companies are using that as an excuse to charge \$2,000 a month for coverage, \$25,000 a year. They call it a pre-existing condition, a prior heart attack. She is not old enough yet for Medicare, but Walt is. He is 68. He had to go back to work so she could be put on his health insurance. Now Walt is asking us to go to work for him and asking us to make sure no one's health history can make staying healthy in the future more expensive.

Ken Hansen is from Mesquite, a town on the Arizona-Nevada border. He has chronic health problems and parts of his feet have been amputated. Ken can't go to a doctor because he makes too much to qualify for Medicaid and too little to afford private insurance. I wish to share with the Senate exactly what Ken wrote me:

I am very frustrated because my only hope is that I die very soon because I can't afford to stay alive.

Those are his words—not my words—that his only hope is that he die. How can we look the other way? How can we possibly do nothing? This isn't about balance sheets or graphs or charts; it is not about contracts or fine print; it is not about politics or partisanship. This is about life and death in America.

Each story is more heartbreaking than the last. Each of these Nevadans has more than enough on his or her mind. Yet each of these citizens took time out of his or her day to beg their leaders to do something.

Mike Tracy, the father of the young man with diabetes and Addison's disease, ended his letter to me just a few days ago with this plea. Here is what he said:

Democrats need health care. Republicans need health care. Independents need health care. All Americans need health care. Get it done.

We can't let them down. We just can't let them down.

Those trying to kill this reform have made it clear they will do anything to stop us. They can recite recycled talking points until their hearts' content, but that is it. But as long as Mike Tracy's son might die from a disease we know how to treat, we can't let these