

other party's plan. This time, it passed—but only because it had bipartisan support. We don't know what will happen when that same question comes before the Senate this week, but we know we won't see a strictly party-line vote.

The lesson is obvious: Neither party can pass a bill without the other party, and neither Chamber can send that bill to the President without the other Chamber. Therefore, if you're looking for a case study on why cooperation is necessary, that is as clear as it comes.

It is just as obvious that we cannot meet in the middle if one side refuses to give any ground. Both parties and both Houses must be willing to work together. We cannot negotiate without a partner on the other side of the table. We will not find a solution in stubbornness.

I will repeat the request I have made since the beginning of the budget debate. It is a request for reasonableness. It is the same call for compromise and consensus that has always kept this diverse Nation moving forward. It is the same appeal made by one of the great Senators in the history of this country—a Senator whose seat the Republican leader now holds. Kentucky's Henry Clay said:

All legislation is founded upon the principle of mutual concession.

If the Senate and House cannot pass a long-term budget that keeps the country open for business, another reality will be made very plain for the American people to see. It will be crystal clear which party was willing to work toward a common goal and which party lacked the courage to compromise.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders, or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half of the time, and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from Maryland is recognized.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I take this time to reflect with my colleagues and say that we celebrate today the 1-year anniversary of the passage of the Affordable Care Act, and to reflect how much happened to improve health care in America since the passage of the Affordable Care Act.

We have reason to celebrate. If you are a senior in the Medicare Program, and you now know that you can see your primary care doctor every year for an annual wellness exam, and that wellness exam will now be covered under Medicare, and you will have an opportunity to meet with your doctor and take charge of your own health, you have a reason to celebrate passage of the Affordable Care Act.

If you are a senior who happens to fall within the coverage gap under the prescription drug benefits in Medicare, the so-called doughnut hole, and you have been forced at times to leave prescriptions on the counter of a drugstore because you could not afford to pay the cost of the prescription, and you now know that there is coverage in Medicare if you fall within that gap—for last year, 3.2 million seniors who fell within the gap received a \$250 check. This year, the seniors who fall within this coverage gap will receive a 50-percent discount on their brandname drugs. Next year, their benefit will be worth as much as \$2,400 and, by 2020, we will close the gap entirely, all as a result of the passage of the Affordable Care Act. So you have reason to celebrate that Congress finally got the job done.

If you are an American family, like many, and you celebrate your child's graduation from college, only to find that your child could no longer be covered under your health insurance policy because of the age restriction, and now you learn that Congress has changed that age to 26, so you can keep your youngster under your family insurance program, and that child now has health insurance, and you are one of 1.2 million people who benefit from this provision that was in the Affordable Care Act, you have reason to celebrate the passage of the Affordable Care Act.

If you are a small business owner who can now afford to cover your employees because of the small business tax credit that was included in the Affordable Care Act—4 million eligible institutions will be eligible for that tax credit, and soon you will be able to get competitive rates. Small businesses today pay 20 percent more for the same coverage large companies have. Congress took action last year to eliminate that disparity. If you are one of those small business owners now benefiting from that tax credit or who will benefit from more competitive rates and better choice, you have reason to celebrate the passage of the Affordable Care Act.

If you happen to be a consumer of health insurance, as almost all of us are, and you want value for your premium dollar, you now know that with passage of the Affordable Care Act, the lion's share of your health premiums must go for health benefits, reining in the excessive administrative costs of private insurance companies, and you know now that Congress has taken action to prevent the abusive practices of

private insurance companies, you have reason to celebrate the passage of the Affordable Care Act.

If you happen to be the woman in Maryland, who was hiking in the mountains of West Virginia and fell off a cliff, was unconscious, and was flown to the closest emergency room to receive care and was denied coverage because she did not call ahead for preauthorization, you have a reason to celebrate the enactment of the Affordable Care Act.

Yes, insurance companies have denied coverage for emergency care because of requirements for preauthorization or have denied coverage because the ultimate diagnosis did not meet their standard for reimbursement, even though your symptoms indicated you should seek emergency care. I started working on that issue in 1995, known as the prudent layperson's standards for requiring insurance companies to reimburse their policyholders for visits to emergency rooms, where their symptoms indicated they should go to the emergency room.

In 1997, Medicare and Medicaid were changed in order to provide for the prudent layperson's standard for reimbursement. Now all insurance companies must comply with that standard because of the passage of the Affordable Care Act.

If you are a parent who has a child who has asthma or you have been told that the insurance company won't provide full coverage because of your child's preexisting condition, and now you can get full coverage for your child, you too have a reason to celebrate the passage of the Affordable Care Act.

If you are an adult and have been told you cannot get insurance because of a preexisting condition, such as high blood pressure, or you happen to be like a couple from Montgomery County, MD, who had to get two separate insurance policies because of preexisting conditions, paying two separate premiums and two separate deductibles, and now you know you can get one insurance plan that will cover your family, you have a reason to celebrate, because that too was corrected by the Affordable Care Act that was passed by Congress 1 year ago.

If you happen to be a taxpayer who is concerned about the fiscal soundness of Medicare or the budget deficit, you too have a reason to celebrate enactment of the Affordable Care Act, because the Affordable Care Act extended the solvency of the Medicare system by 12 years, putting it on a safer basis, making it less vulnerable for our budget.

The enactment of the Affordable Care Act reduced the Federal budget deficit by over \$100 billion during the first 10 years, and over \$1.5 trillion during the first 20 years. This is because, quite frankly, this bill manages illness much more cost effectively. It uses health information technology more effectively and it invests in wellness, and it brings down the cost. That is not what this

Senator is saying has been established; it is what the CBO has told us will bring in savings on our budget deficit. Taxpayers have a reason to celebrate the enactment of the Affordable Care Act.

There is one other reason to celebrate the year's anniversary of the enactment of this legislation. Let me give one more example. A couple of weeks ago I was at the Greater Baden Health Center located about 7 or 8 miles from where we are today. They are doing something about the infant mortality rate in our community. We have too high of an infant mortality rate because of low birth weight babies. Some do not survive and become part of our infant mortality numbers in America where we are much higher than we should be. Others survive and have complications that need to be addressed by our health care system, making it challenging for the infant and expensive for our society.

At the Greater Baden Health Center, they are doing something about that situation. They are expanding their qualified health center to include prenatal care so pregnant women can get the type of attention they need to have healthy babies. That money comes from the Affordable Care Act because of the expansion of our qualified health centers.

We all celebrate what we are able to accomplish. It will keep our children healthier and save us money and have less use of the emergency rooms by expanding care at our qualified centers.

Madam President, if you are concerned about health disparities in America—and you have reason to be—minorities are two times more likely to suffer from diabetes and 33 percent more likely to die from heart disease. In the African-American community, the infant mortality rate is 2.3 times higher than the White community. When we look at the number of people who have access to health care and health insurance, the minority population represents one-third. Yet they are one-half of the people who do not have health insurance.

I think we all agree that we need to do something about that situation. That is not right in our sense of fairness. But let me give one more reason it will save us money.

A study done at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland points out that we can save \$260 billion in excess direct medical care costs if we can deal with the minority health disparities. We had done something about that in the Affordable Care Act. An amendment that I was proud to offer established the Institute for Minority Health and Health Disparities within the National Institutes of Health. We have developed minority health and disparity offices in each of our agencies that deal with health care to do something about health disparities in America. We can all celebrate that we are able to move that forward in the Affordable Care Act.

We should all take pride that America at long last, after decades of unsuccessful attempts, has acted. Health care is a right, not a privilege. As our dear friend, the late Senator Kennedy, said: We no longer have a sick care system. We have taken action to include all under health care in America.

I understand the Republicans in the House want to repeal each and every one of these improvements and accomplishments. They offer no hope of taking up these issues in a serious manner during this Congress. Speaking on behalf of our seniors, speaking on behalf of our small business owners, speaking on behalf of the consumers of health insurance in America, speaking on behalf of what is right, as far as covering and making sure everyone has access to affordable care, we do not want to see that happen. We do not want to move backwards. We have reason to celebrate the accomplishments of moving forward with health care. We want to move forward, not back, and continue to build on an American health care system that provides affordable quality care to all Americans.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

GAS PRICES ON THE RISE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, the rising cost of gasoline has become a major source of concern for most Americans. With prices in most States moving closer and closer to \$4 a gallon, and already higher in some areas, America has a right to know where the President and Democrats in Congress stand on the issue.

Let me begin this morning with a simple observation that it is no accident gas prices are skyrocketing at a time when Democrats control two-thirds of official Washington. It is no secret Democratic leaders in Washington do not particularly care for this issue. Ask them about gas prices and chances are they will tell you about some car they plan to build and have ready for production about 25 years down the road. Suggest we tap some of our domestic sources of oil and they will give you 101 reasons we cannot and how that is not a real solution anyway because it will take too long to get it out of the ground.

We have been having that particular argument for decades now—literally

for decades. Then they have the audacity to step in front of the cameras and tell us they are all for reducing our dependence on foreign sources of oil. With what—windmills?

It is time to be serious about a serious problem. The fact is, there is no reason in the world we cannot invest in future technologies at the same time we are tapping into the resources we already have right here at home and creating jobs while we do it. But Democrats do not seem to like that idea. They would rather force a change in behavior now than giving struggling American families the relief they need from the rising gas prices.

Do not listen to what they say on the issue, watch what they do. Here is what they have done.

Over the past 2 years, the Obama administration has delayed, revoked, suspended, or canceled an enormous range of development opportunities.

One month after the President took office, his administration canceled 77 oil and gas leases in Utah. Once the review was complete, the administration refused to reinstate even a single one.

A month after that, the administration shortened lease terms for offshore oil and gas production and raised fees for permit applications.

Last January, it announced new restrictions for onshore oil and gas exploration in the mountain West.

Last February, it denied a permit to build a bridge needed to access an oil-producing field in Alaska, after the Environmental Protection Agency designated a nearby river an aquatic resource of national importance.

Last April, the administration suspended 61 oil and gas leases in Montana that were issued in 2008 and then announced that all oil and gas leases in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota would be delayed indefinitely.

Last May, the President announced a 6-month moratorium on deepwater drilling—a moratorium that has been repeatedly struck down in the courts.

The list of actions such as these go on and on, and that is to say nothing of the proposed new Environmental Protection Agency regulations on energy that would either cause oil refineries to pass along their resulting new production costs to consumers at the pump or drive them and their jobs overseas.

Let there be no doubt, the efforts of the White House are costing jobs and putting even more pressure on gas prices. Paying lip service to the public's concerns will not solve the problem. Unlocking our own sources of energy at home would help immensely.

Just to give an idea of the kind of resources we have right here at home, consider that just one 2,000-acre section of the nonwilderness sections of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, along with the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, have enough recoverable oil to replace crude imports from the Persian Gulf for nearly 65 years—65 years.

The problem is not that we need to look elsewhere for energy. The problem