

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
S. 1590

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, before the Internet, RCA knew how many records Elvis was selling every day. Before the Internet, Ford knew how many cars they were selling every day. Before the Internet, McDonald's could tell you how many hamburgers it sold each day. Yet the Obama administration cannot tell us how many Americans have tried to sign up for ObamaCare. They can't tell us how many people have tried to sign up for ObamaCare. They haven't told us what level of insurance they bought or in what ZIP Code they live. Not only can they not tell us, they have done their best to keep us from finding out.

With WikiLeaks and Edward Snowden spilling our beans every day, what's happening on the ObamaCare exchanges is the only secret left in Washington. The National Security Agency should learn some lessons from Secretary Sebelius.

We shouldn't have to rely on anonymous sources to get basic information about what's happening with the ObamaCare exchanges.

Yesterday I introduced legislation to require the administration to tell Congress and the American people how many people have tried to sign up, how many did sign up, what level of insurance did they buy, in what ZIP Code do they live, and what the administration is doing to fix the problems. This isn't complicated information. In the Internet age, the administration ought to be able to provide this information every day. They should be able to provide it really every minute. We shouldn't have to pass a law to find these things out.

So I hope every Senator will support my legislation. It is a six-page bill. It has been available to the public now for 24 hours. It is easy to read. The stakes are high for every American.

So I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 1590, a bill to require transparency in the operation of the American health benefit exchanges, and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, reserving the right to object, my good friend from Tennessee has raised just another effort to divert resources from the implementation of the Affordable Care Act which we can then use to fix the very problems he has mentioned. I will point out that we report jobs data on a monthly basis, and this is going to be a different standard. I might also point out that in Medicare Part D, we release those data on a monthly basis.

I agree with my friend that there should be accountability for the mistakes that have happened and the im-

plementation of the law going forward. In fact, right now, the Department is giving us daily updates on their progress in fixing the Web site.

So, again, let's get on with business. I think enough focus has been placed on the mistakes. Hearings are ongoing. There will be hearings in the Senate also. Let's get the problems fixed and move ahead on enrollment without diverting resources.

I thought about my friend's proposal, and I thought maybe we should amend it to say we will put in more money and get more people. I don't think my friend would want to do that, either, so we can take care of it.

So the people there need to get the problem fixed, and let's move ahead aggressively to get people enrolled in what is going to be a positive change for health care in America.

On that basis, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I thank my friend, the Senator from Iowa. I'm disappointed—this administration described itself as the most transparent in history. All we have asked for is how many people are signing up, how did they do, where do they live, and what level of insurance do they have. We ought to know that. Taxpayers ought to know it. So we'll keep trying other ways to get the information the American people deserve to have.

I thank the President, yield the floor, and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FINDING A BUDGET SOLUTION

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I read with great interest the recent opinion piece on congressional budget negotiations written by my good friend Kent Conrad, our former colleague here in the Senate and distinguished chair of the Budget Committee.

I have been fortunate to serve in this Chamber for the past 38 years with principled leaders like Kent Conrad. I was elected to the Senate in 1974, the same year the Congressional Budget Act passed into law, and I have served here with all of the Budget Committee chairs—from Edmund Muskie to PATTY MURRAY.

I think Kent Conrad is right that at this critical juncture we need to have a grown-up discussion about our Nation's finances—both about the debts we incur and the ways in which we pay for them. We have all heard a lot of talk in the last few years about getting our fiscal house in order. It makes for a great campaign slogan. But I am afraid

that too many are not following through on their responsibility to govern.

After jumping from one manufactured crisis to another for the past few years, which has hurt the U.S. economy and America's standing in the world, it is time for reason and sanity to return to the Senate—on the budget process, on nominations, and on a whole host of other issues. Returning to regular order on the budget conference—and letting conference members from the House and the Senate work out a final agreement free from rigid ideological positions—would be a good first step to bringing some comity and order back to this body so we can serve the American people.

I remain ready to work with people on both sides of the aisle in the hopes that we can find a workable budget solution in the coming weeks, and I suggest that everyone heed the calls for bipartisanship and compromise made by Senator Conrad.

With that, I ask unanimous consent that Kent Conrad's full opinion piece from the October 24, 2013, Washington Post be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, Oct. 24, 2013]

OPINION: A FAIR TRADE FOR ENTITLEMENT REFORM INCLUDES INCREASED REVENUE

(By Senator Kent Conrad)

Kent Conrad, a Democrat, represented North Dakota in the Senate from 1987 to 2013.

The Post's Oct. 20 editorial on the budget challenge ["A fiscal quid pro quo"] made important points but was way off-base on the issue of revenue. It suggested that a fair trade would be reductions to the "sequester" budget cuts in exchange for reforms to Medicare and Social Security and said that Democrats should not insist on additional revenue because that's a non-starter with many Republicans. Democrats would make a serious mistake by following that advice.

Our country needs more revenue to help us get back on track. Citing Congressional Budget Office calculations, The Post said that "federal revenue as a share of [gross domestic product (GDP)] will hit 18.5 percent by 2023, near the upper-end of the postwar range." That's true, but the last five times our country had a balanced budget, revenue averaged 20 percent of GDP. The Bowles-Simpson plan, which The Post strongly endorsed, achieved revenue of 20.6 percent of GDP—not by raising tax rates but by broadening the tax base and lowering tax rates.

Tax reform should be part of any budget deal. Tax reform is necessary to unlock the full potential of our economy. The current tax system is not fair and damages U.S. competitiveness. A five-story building in the Cayman Islands claims to be home to more than 18,000 companies. Is it the most efficient building in the world? No! That and other tax scams cost our country more than \$100 billion each year, the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations has found.

If we don't fix the revenue side of the equation at the same time as we repair Social Security and Medicare, it will never happen. To suggest, as The Post does, that Democrats should trade adjustments to the sequester for reforms to these programs assumes that the sequester affects only Democratic priorities. More than half of the \$1.2 trillion in sequester cuts are to defense, long a Republican priority.