

wanted to know where you lived, and if the color of your skin wasn't just right when you were brought to the hospital, you went on your way. Today the disparity in hospitalization rates between minorities and White Americans has decreased significantly.

Medicare and Medicaid have protected the health and well-being of millions of seniors, individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals, and millions of children.

In the past 50 years, Medicaid has grown to be the Nation's primary health insurance program for low-income individuals and families. Medicaid has grown to cover nearly 70 million Americans, including more than 40 million children.

Today Medicaid covers nearly half of all births in the United States and ensures that children receive the health care they desperately need in the early stages of their lives. By providing early childhood health care to millions, Medicaid has improved the long-term health of children and contributed to their overall quality of life.

Medicaid has also provided health care and long-term services to 16 million low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities. Medicaid pays for services that Medicare does not cover. It ensures that low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities have access to a wide variety of services. These options allow them to remain in their communities rather than relocate to nursing homes. But when they do have to go to a nursing home, the vast majority of people in convalescent centers in America are Medicaid recipients.

Sadly, 22 States have chosen not to expand Medicaid coverage, and this decision has hurt millions of people who can't afford health care any other way. Why do States and the Republican Governors of those States oppose this? Because it is part of ObamaCare.

To his credit, the conservative Republican Governor from the State of Nevada, Brian Sandoval, was one of the first Governors to sign on to this program. He didn't care if it was a Democratic program or a Republican program; it helped people in Nevada who needed help. I truly admire him for doing that. The expansion of Medicaid in States throughout the country would boost States' economic activity—and Brian Sandoval knows that—and create job growth, in addition to providing quality, affordable health care to vulnerable Americans. The State of Nevada is a relatively sparsely populated State. Almost 200,000 people are receiving the health care they need and would not have but for ObamaCare and Governor Brian Sandoval.

Medicaid expansion would benefit every State. The Affordable Care Act transformed Medicaid into a true safety net for vulnerable Americans. We should be expanding this coverage, not restricting it for partisan gain.

Medicare and Medicaid have protected Americans for 50 years, and our

Nation is healthier and stronger because of its existence. But despite 50 years of undeniable Medicare and Medicaid success, Republicans remain committed to ending access to health care for those who need it the most.

We will be celebrating ObamaCare's success 50 years from now while Republicans call for the Affordable Care Act to be phased out, like Jeb Bush wants. In 50 years, will there be a Republican Presidential wanna-be out there saying "Let's get rid of ObamaCare; let's phase it out"? I hope not.

Republicans have repeatedly engaged in politically motivated attacks designed to undermine the law that transformed our Nation's health care system. The Affordable Care Act has helped millions of Americans to gain access to quality health care. Since the Affordable Care Act was signed into law, 16.4 million Americans have gotten quality health care—many of them for the first time in their lives. The United States has seen the largest decline in the uninsured rate in decades, if not forever. In the last 18 months, the uninsured rate for nonelderly adults has fallen by 35 percent. Health care costs have grown at their slowest rate in 50 years. Patient safety initiatives are keeping Americans safe.

The Affordable Care Act is working. It is the law of the land, and that is not going to change. There have been more than 50 votes to repeal or undermine the Affordable Care Act and there have been repeated challenges to this law before the courts, but we have won on every level. The American people have won twice with the stamp of approval by the Supreme Court. Last month we witnessed the Supreme Court rule, as I have indicated, again for the second time in favor of the Affordable Care Act. It is here to stay. It is here to stay because the American people want affordable health care.

American seniors need affordable, accessible health care coverage, and they need it right now.

Five decades ago—50 years ago—President Johnson said:

No longer will older Americans be denied the healing miracle of modern medicine. No longer will illness crush and destroy the savings they have so carefully put away over a lifetime so that they might enjoy dignity in their later years. No longer will young families see their own incomes, and their own hopes eaten away simply because they are carrying out their deep moral obligations to their parents, and to their uncles, and their aunts.

The Republicans have spent the last five decades fighting against President Johnson's dream. The Republicans are determined to roll back access to health care for Americans. It is hard to believe, but it is true. Just this week the Senate held a vote on whether to repeal this lifesaving program—again. It is clear that after 50 years, the Republicans have learned nothing.

We should be building on the success of Medicare, Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act. We need to be expanding coverage to all Americans. We should

be encouraging States to expand Medicaid access. Democrats are committed—just as President Johnson was half a century ago—to giving Americans the health care they need and deserve.

Will the Chair announce the schedule for today.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

HIRE MORE HEROES ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 22, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 22) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of determining the employers to which the employer mandate applies under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12 p.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, soon we will vote on final passage of a bill that will provide a long-term solution to the shortfalls of the highway trust fund. If enacted, this bill will provide the longest paid-for authorization of highway and transportation spending in nearly a decade.

This bill is the result of an incredible amount of work by a number of Senators, including our distinguished majority leader as well as the chairman and ranking member of the Environment and Public Works Committee. I commend them for setting aside partisan differences to find a solution despite the cynicism and naysaying from some of our colleagues and others here in Washington.

I am also pleased to have been able to play a part in these efforts, working with Leader MCCONNELL to identify suitable offsets to pay for the reauthorization of the highway and transit programs. While the Finance Committee, which I chair, has jurisdiction over the funding stream for the highway trust fund, we had to cull together offsets from other areas and other committees in order to pay for this multiyear highway bill. This required the cooperation of multiple chairmen and committees, all working together toward a common goal.

One of the most remarkable things about this bill is that it provides 3 full years of highway funding without raising taxes or adding to the deficit. We have heard time and again that a long-term highway bill would only be possible if we included a big tax increase. With the upcoming final vote on this