

continue to use parliamentary maneuvers to try and stop the Senate from voting on them.

Whatever their position on health insurance reform, Senators ought to allow an up-or-down vote. Let's bring this long and vigorous debate to an end. Let's deliver on the promise of health insurance reforms that will make our people healthier, our economy stronger, and our future more secure. And as this difficult year comes to a close, let's show the American people that we are equal to the task of meeting our great challenges.

Remarks on Health Care Reform and Climate Change *December 19, 2009*

Hello. Good afternoon, everybody. You know that I am from Chicago, so let me first say that with the place where I live covered with snow, I'm finally starting to feel like home. And I am sorry to drag you guys out in this weather, but I wanted to speak briefly to you about the significant progress that we've made on two of the major challenges facing the American people: the crushing costs of health care and our dangerous dependence on fossil fuels.

On health care, with today's developments, it now appears that the American people will have the vote they deserve on genuine reform that offers security to those who have health insurance and affordable options for those who do not. And so I want to thank Senator Harry Reid and every Senator who's been working around the clock to make this happen.

There's still much work left to be done, but not a lot of time left to do it. But today is a major step forward for the American people. After a nearly century-long struggle, we are on the cusp of making health care reform a reality in the United States of America.

As with any legislation, compromise is part of the process. But I'm pleased that recently added amendments have made this landmark bill even stronger. Between the time the bill passes and the time when the insurance exchange gets up and running, there will now be penalties for insurance companies that arbitrarily jack up rates on consumers. And while insurance companies will be prevented from denying coverage

Thanks for listening, and on behalf of Michelle, Malia, Sasha, and Bo, happy holidays from our family to yours.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:40 p.m. on December 17 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on December 19. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 18, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on December 19. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

on the basis of preexisting conditions once the exchange is open, in the meantime, there will be a high risk pool where people with preexisting conditions can purchase affordable coverage.

And a recent amendment has made these protections even stronger. Insurance companies will now be prohibited from denying coverage to children immediately after this bill passes. There's also explicit language in this bill that will protect a patient's choice of doctor. And small businesses will get additional assistance as well.

Now, these protections are in addition to the ones we've been talking about for some time. No longer will insurance companies be able to drop your coverage if you become sick, and no longer will you have to pay unlimited amounts out of your own pocket for treatments that you need.

Under this bill, family will save on their premiums, businesses that will see their costs rise if we don't act will save money now and in the future. This bill will strengthen Medicare and extend the life of the program. Because it's paid for and gets rid of waste and inefficiency in our health care system, this will be the largest deficit reduction plan in over a decade. In fact, we just learned from the Congressional Budget Office that this bill will reduce our deficit by \$132 billion over the first decade of the program and more than \$1 trillion in the decade after that. Finally, this reform will make coverage

affordable for over 30 million Americans who don't have it—over 30 million Americans.

As I said before, these are not small changes. These are big changes. They're fundamental reforms. They will save money. They will save lives. And I look forward to working with the Senate and the House to finish the work that remains so that we can make this reform a reality for the American people.

I also want to briefly mention the progress we made in Copenhagen yesterday. For the first time in history, all of the major—the world's major economies have come together to accept their responsibility to take action to confront the threat of climate change. After extremely difficult and complex negotiations, this important breakthrough lays the foundation for international action in the years to come.

Now, this progress did not come easily, and we know that progress on this particular aspect of climate change negotiations is not enough. And going forward, we're going to have to build on the momentum that we established in Copenhagen to ensure that international ac-

tion to significantly reduce emissions is sustained and sufficient over time.

At home that means continuing our efforts to build a clean energy economy that has the potential to create millions of new jobs and new industries, and it means passing legislation that will create the incentives necessary to spark this clean energy revolution.

So even though we have a long way to go, there's no question that we've accomplished a great deal over the last few days. And I want America to continue to lead on this journey, because if America leads in developing clean energy, we will lead in growing our economy and putting our people back to work and leaving a stronger and more secure country to our children. That's why I went to Copenhagen yesterday, and that's why I will continue in these efforts in the weeks and months to come.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:42 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Presenting the Securing Americans Value and Efficiency Award *December 21, 2009*

Health Care Reform

Hello, everybody. Good morning. Before I begin, I want to say a brief word about the historic vote which took place earlier this morning. The United States Senate knocked down a filibuster aimed at blocking a final vote on health care reform and scored a big victory for the American people. By standing up to the special interests who've prevented reform for decades and who are furiously lobbying against it now, the Senate has moved us closer to reform that makes a tremendous difference for families, for seniors, for businesses, and for the country as a whole.

For those who have insurance, reform will mean greater security and stability. No longer will people with preexisting conditions be excluded from coverage. No longer will people

who are seriously ill be dropped from coverage. And no longer will families be allowed to go broke because they're forced to pay exorbitant out-of-pocket expenses.

Many people recall the enormous fights around the patient's bill of rights that never got done. Well, you know what? The patient's bill of rights is embedded in this health care bill and—to make sure that all Americans who have insurance right now are getting a fair deal from their insurance companies.

Small businesses and those who don't get insurance through their employer will finally be able to get insurance at a price that they can afford with tax credits to help. And Medicare will be stronger and its solvency extended by nearly a decade. Seniors will get more assistance with prescription drug costs than they're getting right now. And finally, these reforms