

“Insurance Company Protection Plan,” pretends that it is a patient protection act. It is full of loopholes. It is Swiss cheese legislation. It is hard to defend it.

I can understand why my colleagues do not want to defend it. I can understand why they do not want to debate. I can understand why they have blocked our efforts, so far, to bring patient protection legislation to the floor. But I am telling you something: People in the country are demanding that we pass this legislation.

We are on a mission. The Democrats are on a mission. We are going to bring these amendments to the floor. We are going to insist there be a good, strong, honest debate; and we are going to do well by the people we represent.

I would be pleased to debate anybody, but in the absence of anyone to debate, I yield the floor.

Mr. BINGAMAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I want to speak for just a few minutes.

What is the status of business in the Senate?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico should be informed we are in morning business and there are 4 minutes remaining under the control of the Democratic side.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Robert Mendosa, a fellow in my office, be granted floor privileges during my remarks.

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

Mr. BINGAMAN. I would like to use those 4 minutes to say a few things about the Patients' Bill of Rights and the importance of the issue to a great many people in my State and around the country.

I think it is clear, from surveys I have seen, the American people want reform of this system of managed care and health maintenance organizations. There are a great many instances that have been called to our attention in our home States. I have heard of them in New Mexico, where people think the quality of care and the adequacy of care they are being provided with is not what it should be.

Without passage of some type of meaningful managed care reform, critical health care services will continue to be denied to many of the people we represent. One of the issues I believe is very important is what is referred to as provider nondiscrimination. We need a managed care health system that does not permit health plans to leave out nonphysician providers. I am talking about groups of health care providers such as nurse practitioners, psychologists, nurse midwives, leaving those people out of the network so that patients of these health maintenance organizations, customers of these health maintenance organizations are denied the ability to obtain their health care from those types of individuals.

In New Mexico, this is a critical concern. We have a shortage of physicians in our State. It is, in many parts of our State, very difficult to get health care, if you are required by your HMO to obtain that health care through a physician.

What we would like to do as part of the bill, which we hope to get to vote on in the next week or so, is to ensure that health maintenance organizations, where these people are qualified and certified, permit nonphysician health care providers to participate in these networks.

This is a critical concern in my State. I am sure it is a critical concern in many States.

Another issue that clearly needs to be addressed here is access to specialists. That is an issue I know came up when we had the debate in the Health and Education Committee. An amendment was offered to correct that. I believe Senator HARKIN offered that amendment; it was not successful. I believe it is a very important issue that needs to be revisited on the Senate floor.

There are many people who need the care of a specialist. Whether it is a pediatrician, whether it is an oncologist, whatever the specialty is, those people should not have to go through a family practitioner prior to going to that specialist. We would try to correct that in the legislation as well.

There are many other concerns we have with the bill that came out of the Health and Education Committee. I hope very much we get a full debate in the Senate on the deficiencies of that bill. I hope we get a chance to amend that bill.

The American people have been anxious to see reform in this area now for two Congresses that I am aware of. I think for us to continue to delay and put off and evade this issue is not the responsible course for us to follow. Our constituents, the people we represent in our States, expect better of us.

The people I represent in New Mexico expect me to do something about these very real problems they believe exist. In New Mexico, under the Republican bill that was reported out of the Health and Education Committee, there are almost 700,000 people who will not have substantive protections. In my State, there are 350,000 people who will not be covered at all if we pass the bill that came out of committee.

Mr. President, I see my time is up. I appreciate the opportunity to make comments, and I yield the floor.

Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to extend morning business for 15 minutes under the previous conditions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

CHANGE OF VOTE

Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Mr. President, yesterday on vote No. 180, which was the State Department authorization bill, in that legislation was \$819 million in U.N. back payments that the United States would pay to the U.N. In addition, there was \$107 million the U.N. owed to the United States that was forgiven.

I was unaware that those provisions were in the legislation, and I voted yea. Had I been aware of this, I would have voted nay.

Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote. This will in no way change the outcome of the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

(The remarks of Mr. GRASSLEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 1271 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

MILITARY CHANGE OF COMMANDS

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, in the June edition of Leatherneck magazine, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Charles Krulak, quotes his father as saying: "The American people believe that Marines are downright good for the country."

Mr. President, I agree with the Commandant's father. And I am pleased General Krulak also holds that well founded opinion. The U.S. Marine Corps is collectively good for this country, and the services of individual marines such as General Krulak are a big part of that positive contribution made by the corps.

Unfortunately, the title of the article in which General Krulak quoted his father was "A farewell to the Corps." General Krulak will be retiring after 4 years from his position as Commandant at the end of this month.

I would like to thank him for his service and efforts on behalf of his corps and his nation.

Although I have been on the Armed Services Committee a short 6 months, I

have had several good experiences with the Commandant.

I think the most notable was in May of this year, when a large group of my constituents were taking a tour of the Pentagon, and the Commandant invited them into his office. He said then that he usually tries to do something similar—bring tourists into his personal office—everyday. I do not think Krulak was fully aware of what he was getting himself into, but all 50 or so crowded their way into his office, and listened while he spoke about the corps, the moving of his office down from the 'barbed wire surrounded hill of the Naval Annex' to the corridors of the Pentagon, and the corps' efforts and ability to turn young men and women into marines.

Let me tell you, they were impressed. They were impressed with his position, they were impressed with his efforts, they were impressed with his commitment, and they were impressed with the man.

I have also had correspondence with General Krulak relating to our work on S. 4, and for the process of preparing the defense authorization. He consistently strikes me as a man who is well aware of the challenges his position holds, and works to meet them.

He has been straightforward and dependable. Hearing testimony from him at committee hearings is always a pleasure. He does not rattle off bland platitudes. I felt that I could always rely on his opinion to be the truest possible interpretation of the situation, and one that held the best interests of the country at the foremost.

Mr. President, let me end by repeating: General Krulak has been fundamentally good for this country. I wish him well in whatever new course he sets for himself.

Also, I would like to welcome Gen. James Jones into his role as the 32d Commandant of the Marine Corps. I have met with him only very briefly, but I look forward to working with him. I am sure he will follow in the able footsteps of all the past U.S. Marine Corps Commandants, and serve the Marines and America admirably.

COOPERATIVE THREAT REDUCTION AGREEMENT EXTENSION

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President. I take the opportunity today to call to the attention of Members of the Senate and to the American people a very important event that took place last week but was not widely publicized. On Wednesday, June 16, representatives from the Department of Defense and Russia's Ambassador to the United States, Mr. Yuri Ushakov, signed an agreement extending the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program sponsored in 1991 by our distinguished colleagues, Senator Sam Nunn and Senator RICHARD LUGAR. The agreement signed last week extends the Nunn-Lugar threat reduction programs for 7 years until 2006. That extension will

build upon the critical work already accomplished that has reduced Russia's military threat to the United States and our allies more effectively than any other measures undertaken since the end of the Cold War. In the context of these uncertain times and Russia's uncertain future, the investments made through Cooperative Threat Reduction programs promise to yield dividends that are essential to long-term peace and stability throughout the world.

Indeed, the accomplishments of CTR are a more cost effective means to enhancing national security than any I know. Between 1992 and 1999, the Nunn-Lugar programs have eliminated the potential for nuclear threats from former members of the Soviet Union including Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Belarus, and Uzbekistan. For \$2.7 billion that the United States has spent on CTR since 1992, a bit more than the cost of a single B-2 bomber, there are now 1,538 fewer nuclear warheads available for use against the U.S. or our allies. The Russians have eliminated 50 missile silos and 254 intercontinental ballistic missiles. In addition, we are in the process of dismantling some 30 strategic ballistic missile submarines that formerly threatened the United States from deep ocean sites. So far, U.S. and Russian teams have dismantled 148 missile launch tubes on those submarines and 30 sea-launched ballistic missiles. CTR programs have eliminated more than 40 Russian strategic bombers that used to be within hours of American military and civilian targets. Collectively, those actions under CTR have ensured that Russia has met and continues to meet its treaty obligations under the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, START. More important, they have significantly cut back on the potential threat posed by those weapons to the United States, our allies, and our worldwide security interests.

The Cooperative Threat Reduction program extends beyond the elimination of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery. Funds for this program are allocated to ensure the safe transportation, storage, security, accounting, and monitoring of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons scheduled for destruction and for weapons grade nuclear materials from weapons that have been dismantled. I have visited Russia and personally observed implementation of the Department of Energy's Materials Protection, Control, and Accounting program which enhances day-to-day security at dozens of nuclear sites across Russia. I remain deeply concerned that without that assistance, the possibility of smuggling nuclear materials into the wrong hands is a serious possibility that could threaten the entire world.

Looking toward the future, funds from CTR are helping to convert Russia's reactors that produce plutonium to eliminate that capability. Ultimately, the cutoff of production of

fissile materials is the tool by which we can help prevent the proliferation of nuclear materials from becoming an even greater problem than it is today. Conversion of Russia's nuclear production capability is a key part of addressing that problem.

The Cooperative Threat Reduction program also assists the Russians in meeting obligations assumed under the Chemical Weapons Convention we ratified in the Senate two years ago. Under this program, the United States has assisted Russia in planning the construction of a chemical weapons destruction facility needed to destroy the large volume of aging chemical munitions in their inventory. Funds are essential to keep this program moving forward in order to ensure that we can reduce the threat of proliferation of chemical weapons and their use against our security interests. I am aware that some in the Congress believe that Russia has not shouldered its responsibilities under this and other CTR programs, but I prefer to consider such matters from our own selfish security point of view. To the extent that we are able to purchase or finance reductions to Russian military capabilities that directly threaten us, those are funds well spent. When Russians are able and agree to provide funding or support in kind for CTR programs, so much the better.

I would like to point out an additional benefit to the Nunn-Lugar programs that is not often recognized or understood. I am certain that the Members of this body can recall the perceptions shared by many Americans concerning the government and people of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. I need not remind us of the unbridgeable gap that existed between our governments, our political systems, and our cultures. In the wake of the Cold War, however, many of those gaps have been bridged and important bonds have been forged between our two countries and citizens. Thousands of American and Russian technical and support personnel have built a foundation of trust and understanding through their cooperative efforts under the CTR program. I firmly believe that those bonds will pay dividends and serve the long-term interests of peaceful relations between our two countries—particularly if we in the United States continue to hold the course in supporting CTR and other cooperative programs such as the Initiative for Proliferation Prevention, the Nuclear Cities Initiative, and the Russian American Cooperative Satellite program. Key Russian personnel in implementing those programs have come to know Americans with whom they frequently meet and vice versa. I have spoken personally with many Russians and Americans who are directly involved in these programs all of whom share the same conviction that cooperation is the key to a peaceful future.

These are very uncertain times. We are at a crucial juncture in our relations with Russia that could determine