

man. I asked him some questions. I asked him about local police, did he work with them. Yes.

I asked: How good were they? What he said to me really kind of shocked me.

He said: That is exactly what President Bush asked me when he came by here.

The President was at Walter Reed and visited with him and asked him that question. How are the local police doing? He said: Yes, they are not ready to take over the country right now. But he said they are good. There are some good ones. He talked about when they went on patrol. One of the Iraqi policeman was at the rear of the patrol. They took fire. He returned fire in an effective and courageous way. He was impressed with him. He said that he showed discipline and courage under stress. He was impressed.

I also had the opportunity to meet the chief of police in Baghdad. He is a very impressive man; a two-star general under Saddam Hussein who made negative comments about Saddam Hussein which resulted in him being put in jail for 2 years.

When asked by Secretary Wolfowitz at one point why he spoke out against Saddam Hussein, he said he really didn't speak out. He was talking to his closest friend, questioning him, and it leaked back to Saddam Hussein and he goes to jail. That is the kind of life under which they lived. This man is courageous. Some say the police don't have gumption. But he goes out personally on raids. They are doing raids every night seizing weapons and arresting dangerous individuals.

Two weeks before I got there, leading a raid late one night, the chief of police—you will not see that much in America cities—was out on a raid and was shot in the leg and wounded. He came back to work sooner than he was supposed to according to the doctors because he wanted to be there. He wanted to show his commitment and wanted to get the work done for Iraq.

Subsequent to my return, there was a bomb attempt to kill him.

There is a tough, dangerous group out there. How do you get them? We are not going to get them with rolling tanks down the street. We are not going to get them with armored vehicles on the streets with Americans who really become targets. We are going to get them by utilizing intelligence from individuals. We are going to utilize individual police officers who are Iraqi citizens, who believe in a new Iraq, who are willing to step up and be counted, and who can change that country forever.

It is an exciting thing out there. I particularly wanted to share my thoughts today.

I do not agree with the comments of the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts who suggested that the police in Iraq are not effective and can't do the job. No, we shouldn't walk away from that. We shouldn't leave them out

there exposed. If we stay to back them up, we will be able to draw down our soldiers. And the sooner we can draw down our soldiers, the better we are going to be. That local police force can be the key to stabilizing the country so that a new government can be formed—a free, independent constitutional government that provides legal protection for all.

I think we can be successful. We have made a commitment as a country. We voted in this body 77 to 12 to undertake this activity. We were told that all kinds of bad things would happen. Some have happened. We lost some soldiers. But we lost fewer than most people were predicting. We didn't have the house-to-house fighting in Baghdad. We didn't have the thousands of casualties that many predicted. We didn't have a humanitarian disaster. We did not have a lot of things that were predicted. But the looting that took place exceeded anything I imagined. We found out the infrastructure in Iraq was far more damaged, having had far less updating and improvement in 20 or 30 years of his warring than most people imagined. It will take more money than we thought.

So we get electricity turned on in that country and have it reliable for the first time ever, we get the water on, a healthy water system, a police force, and a continuing strengthening of that government.

We will have a new government and we will have been successful in eliminating a major threat to this world and eliminating one of the most despicable evil leaders this world has seen. I will put him in the top 10 at any time. Any person who sees the graves of people killed by him knows that is true. You see the pleasure the people have of seeing him gone. It is overwhelming. A European poll not too long ago said 87 percent of the Iraqi people did not want the United States to leave right now.

We will be able to help them do something special, create a better life for that area of the world, and in the long run that will be a magnificent advantage to us. We do not want to take over their oil or their land or dictate religious faith. We simply want them to progress, to be successful, to create a good government so their people will be able to live in peace and harmony. That is our goal. It is a great goal and worthy of the United States.

This supplemental is critical. I am a frugal Member of this body. I am proud of the Watchdog of the Treasury Awards I get. I watch closely how we spend money. But right now, let's do the right thing. Step up the effort to create a stable Iraq, step up the timetable of bringing our troops home, and help step up the time the people of Iraq can have a decent government.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SUNUNU). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO JOSHUA ALEXANDER BOYCOTT

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I stand before you today to speak of a young man who has touched many of the lives here in the Senate Chamber. It is with great sadness that I rise today to talk about a young man from Alaska. Alaska and the country lost this young man last week.

On Friday, just 1 week ago, one of my former Senate pages, Joshua Alexander Boycott, was killed in a car accident in his hometown of Fairbanks. It was one of those mornings. He was driving his younger brother to school. In Fairbanks at this time of year, winter is starting to happen. It was the first snowfall, with slippery, icy roads. Apparently Josh lost control of the vehicle and was killed.

Josh was one of those young Americans, those young Alaskans whom we look at and we can identify instantly as a young man going places. I look at the beautiful faces of the young pages who serve in this Chamber. I look at each one of them and I see the potential and the greatness in each and every one of these beautiful young men and women. Josh had that.

Josh came to the Senate during the 2002 fall semester. He was one of those who so thoroughly enjoyed what he did in the Senate as a page. For those who are not familiar with the routines and rituals of the pages on the Senate floor, it may seem that oftentimes what pages do is a bit mundane—filling glasses of water, standing guard at the door during the votes, getting lecterns for Senators so they may speak, running errands all over. It is not exactly intellectually challenging, high-powered stuff. But Josh enjoyed every bit of it. He would stand there and open the door with a big smile and a "Good morning." It was not just to me, his Senator from Alaska, it was to every Senator who came through. He was so thoroughly enjoying being part of the process. He was well liked by the other pages with whom he worked. He did exceptionally well in the page school.

Again, the pages certainly know the routine they have to deal with on a daily basis: Very early morning hours, attending page school, full, long days, attending to their duties here in the Senate Chamber. And then in the evening, it is not as though you have the night off and can go do what you want; it is time to study and do all that is required of you. It is an extremely rigorous schedule, but there were no complaints from Josh. He was thriving on it because he was doing exactly what he wanted to do.

The last time I saw Josh was in late July. He was one of two Alaskans selected to attend the American Legion

Boys Nation, a conference at Marymount University just outside of Washington, DC. After the conference ended, he came up to my office to say hi to everybody because he made great friends here. I was fortunate enough to be having a party for my summer interns at my home that night. We were having a barbecue at the house, so I invited Josh over to join us. He fell right in with this group of new Alaskans he hadn't met, but by the end of the evening it was obvious everybody enjoyed him as much as I had. It was a wonderful conversation. We were talking about what it is he wanted to do when he grew up, where he wanted to go next. He actually had aspirations of attending my alma mater in Washington, DC, which is Georgetown. Josh was in the process of applying to the university.

What he really wanted to do was return to Washington, DC, to continue his passion for politics. He had seen so much, he had observed so much, and was so stimulated by what he saw around him that he wanted to come back and make a difference. I have no doubt that were he able to, he would have done just that.

In addition to being a great young man everybody liked, he was a great student. He was at the top of his class, ranking 15 out of 262 seniors. He scored over 1500—actually, 1510—out of a possible 1600 on his SAT exam. He was an incredible singer. I had the privilege of being serenaded, if you will, by his singing choral group in Fairbanks. I looked over and said, wait a minute, don't I know that boy from somewhere? It was during the summer months. He left DC as a page and he was then back in Fairbanks. I looked over and I thought, wait a minute, that is Josh. What is he doing singing like a bird. It was beautiful, just gorgeous.

Josh was a dynamic young man, a gifted young man who had a future that I think we can look to and say he was making a difference. It is a tragedy Josh's life was cut short. He was truly an extraordinary young man who brought so much joy and so much pleasure to everybody who was around him. I personally feel blessed to have known him, to have been able to share some of his short time with him. I ask that we remember his friends, and particularly his family, who are grieving for this loss at this particular time.

But as we reflect on the life and contributions of a young man such as Josh Boycott, I suggest all those who are able to serve us here as pages in the Senate look at this as a gift, an opportunity to be in a place of service, to be in a place where you can learn, and you can give back so much at a later point in your life.

So, again, I am blessed to have known Josh. I know many in this Chamber feel the same way. I mentioned yesterday in the cloakroom that I was going to be speaking about Josh, and everyone in the cloakroom remembered him. He has been gone from the

Senate Chamber now for over 6 months. All the Senate pages look alike—in terms of their dress, that is—yet Josh had distinguished himself.

So it is with great love and respect that we pay tribute to this fine young man and to his family during this time of mourning.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, health care affects each of us in very personal ways. As a physician, but also being majority leader, people will come to me and ask: What are you doing about this particular health care issue? It might be a senior who asks: Why don't I have access to prescription drugs as I did when I was 60 years of age and employed by a company, and all of a sudden it disappears when I go into Medicare?

That is the type of question to which this body has responded and, indeed, we have passed a prescription drug benefit appropriately coupled with health care—Medicare specific—modernization, in the sense that it brings the Medicare Program up to today's standards, the type of health care to which other people have access.

We are addressing in the conference between the House and the Senate this Medicare prescription drug package. We had two meetings today with the various conferees, in a bipartisan way—the House and Senate together working through the details of marrying the House and the Senate bill. I am absolutely confident that under the leadership of Chairman Bill Thomas in the House and Vice Chairman Chuck Grassley in the Senate that this conference will deliver a bill in October that will accomplish that goal of health care security and access to prescription drugs for all seniors.

People also ask me: What about those people who do not have access to health insurance, those people who are not in Medicare at all? Medicare is our program for seniors and individuals with disabilities. What about those who are not in Medicaid, which is our unique Federal-State partnership through which health care is delivered for the underserved and the impoverished or poor of the Nation? What if one is not in an employer-sponsored plan as I mentioned?

Most people who are not in Medicare and Medicaid, the overwhelming majority get their health care through employer-sponsored plans. What if somebody is not in one of those plans today? What if one is not in the SCHIP

program, the program that originated in our Congress that reaches out to children predominantly run by States, or if one is not in a Government program or not in the private program and thus uninsured? What are you doing, Senator FRIST, and what will you do?

This week, the Census Bureau confirmed what many of us felt and feared, and that is that the number of people without health insurance increased last year to over 43 million. That is about one out of every seven Americans under the age of 65. That represents a 5.7 percent increase over 2001. So the uninsured number is increasing, and there are a lot of reasons why. We have talked in our various conferences and committees and debated why that number is increasing. One can parse the statistics and numbers and say that is how many do not have insurance over a period of time, and 6 months later many of them will have insurance.

Putting all that aside, I argue that the uninsured are among the greatest health care challenge we have in the United States of America today. Thus, I believe we have a real obligation not to say we have so much else going on that we cannot address that but that we do have really a moral obligation to address this issue of the uninsured and to do it in a systematic way.

As I mentioned before, very much of our focus has been on Medicare today. I will mention shortly some of what we have been doing with regard to the uninsured, but there is still a lot we need to be doing. If we step back and look at our economy, although the economy itself is improving—and maybe not as quickly as a lot of us would like, but the economy is getting better each day—in spite of that, the budget pressures at the State level and the job losses from last year combined in a very complex way to increase the number of uninsured to 43 million people. To me, this is one of the most daunting health challenges—I would say it is even beyond health policy challenges—that we have affecting our Nation.

I say that in part because of personal experience. I have had the opportunity to treat Medicare and Medicaid patients and the uninsured through the transplant program in which I had the opportunity to participate in Nashville. Both in the acute care and in the chronic care, it is obvious that if one has no health insurance, no help with being able to access health care with a lowered financial burden, one's quality of health care suffers. It is not as good as the health care of people who have some type of insurance, private sector or public insurance.

The uninsured are four times less likely to receive dental care and necessary medical care. They are five times less likely to obtain prescription drugs. They are four times more likely—and this really makes sense—to access the emergency room for routine care rather than the more efficient, and arguably more effective, channels