

Everywhere I go, people are worried that their health care costs are rising. If they have health care through their jobs, they are afraid they might lose it. If they are paying for it themselves, they are afraid they can not afford it any longer. I think every American should have access to the same affordable health care options that members of Congress have.

At the very least, there are a number of steps we can take immediately. We should be providing health coverage to uninsured parents who have children eligible for Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program, and I think we should let States have the option of covering pregnant women and children until the age of 20.

We should create a tax credit to help small business owners provide health care coverage for their employees. Most employers I talked to want to provide health insurance; they are just having an increasingly difficult time affording it.

This is a crisis, and we need to confront it. The ideas are there. We need the leadership.

Out in our small towns and farming and ranching communities, those concerns add up to one that is even greater—that a way of life is being lost. I have been visiting these communities for more than 25 years. There is nothing more gratifying to me than to see a family farmer or rancher raise their children up, teach them how to farm, and then pass their land down to them. But it is happening less frequently these days.

More often, children are forced to leave the communities they know and the families they love to find work in other places. They do not want to leave. But they can not find work good enough to allow them to raise a family. And so the way of life their families have enjoyed for generations is being lost.

But there is something else shared by the people I saw, and the places I visited: determination.

They are determined to make tomorrow better than today. You put them on a job, and they will work harder, and longer, and better than any worker in the world. You give our farmers and ranchers a fair price for what they produce and they will feed the world. You respect the service and protect the rights of our Guard and Reserve, and they will always step up to serve.

That is why I ask that in the time we have left in this session of Congress, we hear these concerns and act on them.

Yes, I saw anxiety and uncertainty. But I also saw pride and determination. I saw people willing to work together to make life better for their families, and strengthen their communities. That is what South Dakotans have always done.

If we adopt the same sense of patriotism and common purpose I saw across South Dakota, I have no doubt that we can make the short time we have left this year a time of accomplishment for

the people we serve, to help them meet the challenges they face.

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS

There is one other serious public health challenge I want to mention this morning. It is a challenge I first learned about years ago during visits to Indian reservations in South Dakota. It is called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders—FASD, for short.

FASD is an umbrella term that describes a range of physical and mental birth defects that can occur in a fetus when a pregnant woman drinks alcohol. It is a leading cause of mental retardation in America. It is also 100 percent preventable when women abstain from alcohol during pregnancy.

Every year in America, an estimated 40,000 babies are born with FASD, costing Americans more than \$3 billion each year in direct health care costs, and many times that amount in lost human potential. You can find FASD in every community in America. Native, non-native, rich, poor it doesn't discriminate.

Today is an important day in America's fight against this devastating disorder. It is America's first National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Day.

I thank Senator MURKOWSKI for sponsoring this resolution establishing national FASD day. I was proud to be a cosponsor.

Fifteen years ago, my wife Linda and I and a group of friends founded an organization that we called NOFAS, the National Organization of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Back then when we met in the living room of a very dear friend, Terry Lierman, there were not many of us to talk about these issues. And scientists and doctors understood very little about FAS. But we have learned an extraordinary amount since then. National FASD day will help us get the knowledge we have learned out to the people who need it the most.

We can save so many children and save families so much heartache simply by increasing people's awareness of what FASD is and how we can prevent it.

But we can't stop there. We need to continue to research and do more to help people who are living with FASD make the most of their God-given talents and abilities.

In 1998, I was proud to be the lead sponsor of legislation that created an FASD prevention and services program and a national task force on FAS and fetal alcohol effect.

Two months ago, I introduced a bill called the Advancing FASD Research, Prevention, and Services Act. My bill would identify areas for additional research by the National Institutes of Health.

It would improve coordination among Federal agencies involved in FASD treatment and research, and establish statewide FASD systems and local community partnerships—like a model partnership that is already up and running in South Dakota and other Midwestern States.

It would improve support services for families who are living with FASD. And it would strengthen educational outreach efforts to doctors, teachers, judges and others whose work puts them in contact with people with FASD, or with women who might be at risk of drinking during pregnancy.

Forty-thousand American children a year are born with FASD. We cannot leave these children behind, either. Whatever investments we make in FASD prevention, research and treatment will pay for themselves many times over in reduced health care costs and increased human potential.

Over the last 15 years, we have unlocked many of the mysteries surrounding FASD—and many more answers are just inches beyond our reach. As we observe this first National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Day, I ask my colleagues to take the next necessary steps in the fight against this devastating but completely preventable disorder. Before this Congress ends, let us pass the Advancing FASD Research, Prevention, and Services Act.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before the distinguished leader leaves the floor, I knew the minority leader was going to speak on fetal alcohol syndrome. But I ask the distinguished Senator from South Dakota—I have in my library a book that he recommended written by someone from South Dakota on this subject, a book on this terrible problem that affects a lot of different people, especially in Indian country. I have never forgotten that book. It was something I had never heard of until I read that book. Does the Senator remember that book?

Mr. DASCHLE. I do so well. I have shared it with many people. I thank the Senator from Nevada, my dear friend and colleague, for sharing that observation. Michael Dorris is the author's name. The name of the book is "The Broken Cord." Michael introduced me to this whole issue. He tells the story in his book about two children in South Dakota who had fetal alcohol syndrome. Both have passed away. Both struggled mightily for years. And, of course, the extraordinary problems that the family had to confront are all accounted for in that book. Unfortunately, we lost Michael a few years ago, a powerful advocate for a national advocacy for addressing this issue. But I only hope more people will read that book. I appreciate the fact that my friend called it to the attention of our colleagues this morning.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEWINE). Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for not to exceed 60 minutes, with the first 30 minutes under the control of the majority leader or his designee, and the

second 30 minutes under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, under the control of time of the Democrats, I yield 20 minutes to the Senator from New Jersey, Mr. LAUTENBERG, and 10 minutes to the Senator from Arkansas, Mr. PRYOR.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER AWARENESS DAY

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, as the distinguished minority leader and distinguished Senator from Nevada have spoken to this morning, today is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day in the United States.

The ninth hour of the ninth day in the ninth month having arrived, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate observe a moment of reflection to remind women who are pregnant and those women who may become pregnant that no amount of alcohol, none at all, is safe during the 9 months of pregnancy.

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

(The Senate observed a moment of reflection.)

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, by raising awareness one moment at a time, we can attempt to minimize the damaging effects of drinking during pregnancy.

In late February of 1999, there was a small group of parents who were raising children afflicted with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, and this small group of parents essentially set out to change the world. The leaders of this group were Bonnie Buxton and Brian Philcox of Toronto and Teresa Kellerman of Tucson.

They were frustrated, frustrated about the lack of public awareness about fetal alcohol spectrum disorders by both the public and the professionals. These parents wondered aloud. They were communicating with one another on an online Internet support group called F-A-S link. They wondered, What if on the ninth minute of the ninth day of the ninth month we asked the world to remember that during the 9 months of pregnancy a woman should remain alcohol free. And what if we also asked the world to remember those millions of people who will never fulfill their potential because of prenatal alcohol exposure.

And at this moment, they asked: Could we begin to change the world? Can we begin to change the path that so many children have been faced with as they set out in the world burdened with the affliction they were born with, fetal alcohol disorders?

So this year, for the sixth consecutive year, communities across the world are pausing during the ninth hour to acknowledge International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day. FAS Day will be observed extensively in my home State of

Alaska with ceremonies being observed across the State.

I appreciated the comments from the minority leader about the devastating effects in his home State of South Dakota. In Alaska, we, too, are faced with incredible statistics as they relate to those who are born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

In many parts of my State, particularly in the rural parts of the State, we have villages where the amount of children born with FASD is four times the national average. The statistics are absolutely horrific.

I was in a very small community of about several hundred people during the August recess. I was approached by a woman who was a teacher. She had been out in this community for several years. Her greatest concern as a teacher was what I was going to do in my capacity in the Senate to make women aware of the consequences of drinking while pregnant. She was dealing with students coming to her classroom who were not only not able to learn but quite possibly will never be able to learn because they were born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.

I am grateful the Senate is recognizing International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day and has paused to join in this worldwide moment of reflection. For this, I thank my colleagues, especially the distinguished minority leader, the Senator from South Dakota, who has joined with me in offering Senate Resolution 390 creating the first National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day earlier this year. I hope we will continue to pause in the ninth hour of the ninth day each September until fetal alcohol spectrum disorders are eradicated.

The eradication of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders is by no means an impossible dream. This is achievable. The simple truth about fetal alcohol spectrum disorders is they can be eradicated, they can be stopped, they can be wiped out if women resolve to consume no alcohol during the term of their pregnancy.

This simple prescription—no alcohol—may seem extreme, it may seem absolute, it may even seem harsh to some, but there is no gentler way to put it.

The term “fetal alcohol spectrum disorders” describes a range of conditions that can befall a child whose mother consumed alcohol during pregnancy. I will not list the technical names of each of those conditions because that is not important. What is important is that if women consume alcohol during pregnancy, they expose their unborn child to the risk of suffering one or more of the fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

It is vitally important for all women to know that fetal alcohol spectrum disorders are the No. 1 preventable cause of mental retardation and birth defects. An individual with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders can incur a life-

time health cost of over \$800,000. Children do not outgrow fetal alcohol disorders; the physical and behavioral problems can last a lifetime. When a pregnant woman consumes alcohol, it passes through her bloodstream to the unborn child. It can cause damage to the brain. It can result in low birth weight. The child, when he or she is born, may have trouble sleeping, may have trouble eating. As the child matures, he or she can have problems learning, paying attention. Some even need lifelong medical care.

It should be stressed that there is no woman who is genetically immune from the consequences of consuming alcohol during pregnancy. The message is very clear, it is very simple: In pregnancy, no amount of alcohol, no matter how small, is safe. There is no safe time. There is no safe drink. There is no safe amount. The message is, if you are pregnant, do not drink. If you drink, do not get pregnant.

Yesterday afternoon, the President of the United States wrote a message to all of those observing National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day. I ask unanimous consent the text of the President's message be printed in the RECORD.

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

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, September 8, 2004.

I send greetings to those observing National Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day on September 9, 2004.

Children are a precious gift and a source of great hope for our future. To preserve their dreams and their health, we must continue to work together to increase awareness about the dangers of alcohol consumption by expectant mothers. This observance helps to educate the public about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and its effects, such as learning disabilities and mental illness, and promote healthier communities.

I applaud all those involved for your compassion and your dedication to improving the health and well-being of our children and their parents. Your efforts bring comfort to countless families and help make America a better place.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes.
GEORGE W. BUSH.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. DEWINE. Madam President, let me first commend my colleague from Alaska as well as my colleague from South Dakota for their very excellent statements about a problem that I understand affects their States but certainly affects every State in the Union. I hope their comments today will be of help. I know their efforts will certainly help. It is, as my colleague from Alaska has so eloquently said, very preventable. It is something that we who have the opportunity to use this bully pulpit of the Senate, as Theodore Roosevelt would say, can talk about to educate and inform people about the problem and that it is, in fact, preventable.