

very good debate in committee and reported him out of that committee with an overwhelmingly positive vote.

Mr. GOSS is a highly capable manager and leader, with a strong background and extensive experience in intelligence matters. As we all know, he served in the Congress representing the people of southwest Florida for the past 15 years. He has a long history of public service, which I am sure will be outlined on the floor later. He served as mayor of Sanibel Island. In 1983, he was appointed to the Lee County Board of Commissioners by then Governor BOB GRAHAM. PORTER GOSS has a long career that has, of course, extended these last 15 years as a House Member where he held the chairmanship of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

As chairman, he led one of the key investigations into possible intelligence failures regarding 9/11. He was thorough. He demonstrated a thoughtful and fair approach in these hearings and investigations. His committee's findings did add critical insights into how we can and should move forward to strengthen our defenses against terrorist attack.

So far, his committee, including the subcommittees, has held over 60—I think it was 62—oversight hearings on various aspects of the intelligence community. That number is more than the committee has held in any other calendar year. I use that as an example to show that Mr. Goss takes his duty to investigate and reform the intelligence community very seriously.

Despite this, he did come under some harsh criticism from the other side. It has been charged that he has been too partisan in his career as a Congressman to take over this very important post. I do believe, however, that if one looks at his record of service to this country, that that criticism falls by the wayside.

PORTER GOSS has specific experience working for the Agency he is now nominated to run. During the Cold War, Mr. Goss was a clandestine services case officer. He served as director of operations. In his own words, the CIA's mission "is to obtain the plans and intentions of our enemies, adversaries and their associates before they could attack the United States."

Mr. Goss articulated so clearly and succinctly how this has occurred and will occur, and states very clearly indeed this mission has not changed and will not change.

Mr. Goss understands the criticism now being leveled at him. As he told the Senate Intelligence Committee, he is sensitive to it; he understands the grave responsibility of leading the CIA and effecting the necessary reforms to strengthen our Nation's security. As he himself explains, being the Director of the CIA is a capabilities job, not a policy job.

There is no doubt that PORTER GOSS—former CIA agent, former U.S. Army intelligence agent, Congressman,

and public servant—is totally committed to the safety and security of America. He is committed to making the CIA run effectively. He has both the inside and the outside perspective we need. Clearly, Mr. Goss is the man for the job. I urge my colleagues to give him their overwhelming support when we vote on this nomination today. He is an outstanding choice to lead this agency.

I do hope we do not have a shift in conversation, which should be about his eminent qualifications, to distracting other issues. I do hope we focus on the man and the job for which he is being nominated.

INTELLIGENCE REFORM

Let me also close in saying we made real progress on the intelligence reform front. I know there are a lot of people who say slow down or don't have knee-jerk reactions or don't go too fast or it is a huge issue. I think the leadership is very sensitive to that. I wish to reassure our colleagues and the American people and the other House—really everyone—that we are addressing this as a huge issue, as big as any issue we have had to address in recent times, because it does focus on the safety and security of the American people.

There is a sense of urgency that this body has a responsibility to reflect. If there is a better system, if there is a better way to guarantee the safety and security of Americans, and we know it—and we do know it—then it is our responsibility to act and to do it thoughtfully and deliberately, and that is the process that the Democratic leader and I set up in which to address the two important issues.

Senator SUSAN COLLINS and Senator JOE LIEBERMAN, who are managing the initial legislation through the Governmental Affairs Committee, have very carefully, and are very carefully, considering all the information. They have been doing so for a long period of time, most acutely since the day the 9/11 Commission report and recommendations came out. They made great progress in marking up this legislation yesterday and will continue on that over the course of the day. That is exactly the task Senator DASCHLE and I set out for them in late July, to have the vehicle through which all the ideas, thoughts, and deliberations can be collected, understanding there are lots of very good ideas out there. But it is an important vehicle, an important bill, and one we will be addressing on the floor of the Senate next week.

The committee's baseline legislation does create a national intelligence director. It does establish a national counterterrorism center, which has the responsibilities which have been well defined in the legislation. It does implement a whole range of initiatives to improve the quality and effectiveness of the intelligence community. It does track closely with the plans and decisions put forward by many bodies, including proposals put forth by the White House, which has embraced the

major conclusions of the 9/11 Commission.

I do hope, once this bill is completed in the Governmental Affairs Committee, people take the time to look at it very quickly and look at possible amendments over the course of the end of this week so they will be prepared for next week in terms of amendments they might put forward, so we, over the course of the deliberations, can improve that bill appropriately where people think it needs to be improved.

Just one final comment: Senator DASCHLE and I established a bipartisan task force to address the issues that look at how we need to reorganize in this body, so that our responsibility of oversight can be appropriately carried out. That task force has met on a number of occasions, at the Member level and at the staff level. Senators MCCONNELL and REID, the managers of this effort who represent the leadership on that task force, have been discussing this matter, as I understand it, daily.

There are a number of issues on which we can come to agreement relatively quickly. Others will have to be resolved through floor debate and votes. That just remains to be determined, once we see what those recommendations are. Either way these reforms will be implemented through Senate resolution or through modification of the Senate's rules. My goal remains to get these reforms in motion before the Senate adjourns next month.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAHAM of South Carolina). The Democratic leader is recognized.

INTELLIGENCE DELIBERATIONS

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I wish to associate myself with the remarks made by the majority leader with regard to the progress we have made on both fronts, both the reorganization of the executive branch as well as the reorganization of the legislative branch with regard to the 9/11 recommendations. I think both efforts have been laudable, they have been bipartisan, and they have been cooperative.

I don't think that being deliberate and being expeditious is a mutually exclusive proposition. We have to be deliberate but I don't see any reason why we can't also be expeditious.

Three very important commissions have analyzed and advised over the course of the last 3 years. It is not as if this came up within the last couple of weeks. It has been under consideration and very thoughtfully and carefully considered. I found it somewhat remarkable that all three commissions had many of the same recommendations to the Congress.

So this is in keeping with those experts who have very thoughtfully and carefully deliberated about this matter. We are simply continuing in that deliberative fashion, first in the committee and then on the task force. I am hopeful we can continue to be both deliberate as well as expeditious as we

consider our responsibilities before the end of this session of Congress.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

During the Democratic period this morning, I ask unanimous consent that Senator KENNEDY be given 10 minutes; Senator MURRAY, 5 minutes; Senator CONRAD, 25 minutes; and Senator REID, 5 minutes.

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

Mr. DASCHLE. I ask, as is always the case, the leader time not be taken from the Democratic time.

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

THE SKYROCKETING COST OF HEALTH CARE

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, recently, a new study confirmed a trend that most American families and businesses have known and felt for the past 3 years. Health care costs are rising at unsustainable rates, straining family budgets, weakening our economy, hampering job growth and forcing millions more Americans every year to go without insurance.

According to the annual survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation, health premiums increased 11.2 percent last year, more than five times the rate of wages. This is the fourth consecutive year of double-digit increases. Since 2000, health care premiums have increased by 59 percent and 5 million fewer Americans have access to employer health care coverage.

Last month the Census Bureau also reported that in 2003 alone, the number of uninsured Americans jumped by 1.4 million. Seniors are among the hardest hit. In addition to facing record increases in the price of prescription drugs, Medicare recipients recently learned they will be forced to pay a 17.5 percent increase in premiums, the steepest increase in Medicare's history.

The true costs of this crisis can't be depicted by statistics. There is no way to measure the stress caused by exorbitant health care bills. There is no way to measure the cost of the fear of families who worry that they are one lay-off, one bad crop, one accident, or one illness away from being totally vulnerable, and they feel helpless to protect themselves.

Not long ago, I heard from the Imm family of Turton, SD. A few months back, their 24-year-old son, Monte, came down with a case of Crohn's disease.

As his disease grew worse, he couldn't work and he had to quit his job. After his insurance lapsed, he tried to buy coverage for himself, but with his condition, no insurer would offer him a policy.

Monte's monthly prescription bill is \$500, and that is on top of the tests and emergency room visits that have become all too routine.

Doctors in Sioux Falls have recommended a trip to the Mayo Clinic, but the clinic requires a \$1,500 deposit

just to see Monte. The total cost will be much, much higher. Monte's parents are trying to help and are reaching into their retirement savings to do so. But Monte's health care costs will surpass \$10,000 this year alone, and without good insurance, eventually the medical bills will eat up all they have worked for.

Millions of American families are in the same position as the Imm family, and the implications of this crisis are rippling outward throughout our country.

There is new evidence that as the cost of health care goes up, it is eating away at America's economy, holding back job creation, and stifling growth. A recent article in the New York Times showed that the cost of health insurance is preventing businesses, large and small, from hiring new workers, even if the workload demands it.

One small business owner said:

Before, we hired based on workload. Now it's a question of affordability.

Economists are finding that high health care costs are a major reason our economy has been unable to create jobs. Not long ago, when I asked a businessman why he outsources his jobs overseas, he said the reason was health care. He did not have to pay it in India. He did not have to pay it in countries abroad. He pays it here at home.

Small businesses, which employ 50 percent of the Nation's workforce, face the greatest pressure of all. Because they are not big enough to bargain with insurers for better rates, and they cannot spread risk among larger pools of employees, small businesses too often are forced to pay for the nationwide increase in health care costs.

In the past year, in the midst of the toughest business environment in a generation, the total cost for insuring employees of small businesses alone rose 18 percent. Those small businesses that try to do the right thing and offer their employees health benefits are finding it more difficult to do so with each passing year.

I was recently contacted by Skip VanDerhule, who runs VanDerhule Moving and Storage, in Yankton. Even after raising employee premiums and copays, Skip's monthly premiums have risen 252 percent in 6 years. Skip has tried to look for better coverage, but recently an employee needed a kidney transplant, and he requires \$30,000 per year in medicine alone just to keep his body from rejecting the new kidney. "As soon as the insurer sees that," Skip said, "they don't want us. And they'll quote us a price to make sure that we don't want them." So Skip is stuck with the prospect of higher health care costs with absolutely no end in sight.

In most businesses, the costs are passed along to their employees. Jana Schroeder, a medical professional from Sioux Falls, wrote me to say that even with good, dependable health insurance, her family pays \$10,000 a year in health care costs.

A recent, routine mammogram cost \$2,700, of which she was asked to pay \$850. She said:

I guess I should feel lucky I have insurance, but \$848 is a full paycheck [for me]. So, do you pay that medical bill or the house payment? I surely can't pay it all at once.

Even with 100,000 Americans losing their health insurance every month since January of 2001, the White House has not provided any real options, no leadership in stopping the growth of this crisis.

Some of the most promising possibilities for bringing down the cost of health care, such as drug reimportation, the administration has opposed. Yet this crisis will not solve itself. Unless we act, health care premiums will continue to rise, driving more people into the ranks of the uninsured, and holding back more businesses from earning profits and creating jobs.

We have to do better. This is a national problem, and fixing it demands national leadership. Medical research is producing miracles quite often. Yet we are not solving a problem that is dragging tens of millions of Americans into poverty and poor health. This is not a question of ability or capacity; it is a question of will and leadership. It is time we seek out new ideas to help bring down the cost of health care.

One promising new initiative would create a reinsurance system to help blunt the cost of catastrophic medical illness. Some researchers have suggested that such a program could save South Dakota employers tens of millions of dollars each year and billions nationwide.

We need to debate these issues in Washington, but, regrettably, we have not had the opportunity to do so. In the past 2 years, we have spent 30 days discussing ways to limit access to the courtroom, but not 1 day to debate real ways to bring down the cost of health care for all Americans.

It is time for real action. We have an obligation to focus on the troubles of our economy and the Americans who are struggling to work and raise families. Our citizens are asking for leadership, and we have an obligation to answer that call.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 90 minutes. The first 45 minutes is under the control of the majority leader or his designee and the next 45 minutes is under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee.

The Senator from Nevada.