

Critical to our long-term competitiveness is an educated and skilled workforce. Chairman ENZI will introduce legislation today grounded in essential core principles.

We will improve our Federal education and training programs by setting high expectations and raising achievement for all students. We will demand accountability for results. And we will support learning opportunities for students at all stages in life.

It is time that health care followed the rest of our economy and join the Information Age of the 21st century.

Our health care system is a model of spectacular inefficiencies: high and rapidly rising health care costs, growing ranks of the uninsured, chasms in quality and health care disparities.

In order to transform this system, we must agree on a guiding principle: all Americans deserve the security of lifelong, affordable access to high-quality health care.

The focus of a 21st century health care system must be the patient. The system must also be responsive primarily to the consumer, rather than third-party payers. In a transformed system, we must reestablish the doctor-patient relationship, and utilize technology to promote efficiency and provide care.

I am pleased that we will be introducing legislation that begins to build on these principles, utilizing the work of Senator GREGG and the Republican Task Force on the Uninsured. We will address rising costs, increase coverage and expand access to care.

We are also a Nation that values community, family, and compassion. We will work to build on the success of our welfare laws which have helped over 7 million people move from dependency to the dignity of work.

But in doing so, we will recognize the need to support those who do the hard work of compassion—caring for those in need. Our tax proposals will support these private efforts while also helping those who are raising children and ending the discrimination against marriage in the law.

We will also continue our efforts to promote and defend marriage, and to support parents as they seek to guide their children in difficult times. Today, Senator ALLARD will introduce the marriage protection amendment which I hope will be sent to the States for ratification.

Last Thursday, we had the opportunity to celebrate the enduring value of a free people exercising their right to self-governance. But with each new political beginning, we have the responsibility to answer to the people we serve. I believe that we have such an opportunity, and I have great faith in my colleagues in the U.S. Senate to dutifully answer that call.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

INTRODUCING DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP BILLS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in the beginning of each session of Congress, the majority and minority introduce their bills. The first 10 bills are those of the majority. That is the tradition of the Senate. The distinguished Republican leader has worked hard, as have I, putting forward the bills that represent the majority. I have worked hard putting forward the bills that represent the minority, and I with Senator DURBIN, Senator STABENOW, and Senator SCHUMER today in the Lyndon Johnson Room presented our bills to the public.

The promise of America is a simple one. It is a promise that says if one works hard and plays by the rules, they can build a stronger, brighter future for themselves and their family. This promise has lived on for generations in this great country of ours. It is one that I have lived personally.

As a result of hard work and the generosity of people who helped me with my education, I received a good education, and in the process many doors were opened. After completing my education, I was able to go into business and now have what I believe is the best job in the world—a Member of the Senate representing the people of the State of Nevada.

My story is not unique. As many know, I was born and raised in Searchlight. Searchlight represents many places throughout this country. It represents countless individuals whose lives have been blessed, as mine has. I am sorry to say that these stories about a young boy or girl from a place like Searchlight are becoming fewer and fewer. We now have crumbling schools. The average school in America is 50 years old. We have schools such as those in the southern Nevada area, the Las Vegas area, that are being built at a rapid pace. As many as 18 in 1 year have to be dedicated to keep up with the growth of Las Vegas. The superintendent of public education has become a superintendent of public construction. School districts need help with their schools, in inner cities and in rural communities.

Good-paying jobs are giving way to jobs that, no matter how hard one works, just don't pay the bills. There are 45 million people without health care. That means there are too many Americans who are not getting the care they need to live healthy and prosperous lives.

This is the America we live in today, a country whose founding promise is slipping further away from reality for far too many American families, a country where a kid like me from Searchlight finds it harder to get ahead, despite the generosity of people in the community, the good will of teachers, and a work ethic, which is important.

Why do we find ourselves in this state today? Why is the promise of America, the promise that led me and others to this great Chamber, not still

alive and well for all of us? In part, it is because we have a Government that simply does not live up to the values upon which the promise was made. We have leaders whose poor planning and mismanagement have sent young men and women into battle overseas, some say without the equipment and support they deserve to succeed in the battlefield.

Some way, and I certainly underscore this, there was a plan to win the war but not a plan to win the peace. We have a Government that by any measure fails to do all it can to make our country safe and secure. We have leaders who love to create crises when they do not exist, such as Social Security, which will be funded for many decades into the future, some say as far as the year 2055.

Some say there is a crisis with judges. This morning someone asked: What happens if you do to President Bush this next 4 years what you did the first 4? I say, well, he should jump with joy. That would mean 408 judges he would get approved and 20 disapproved.

The Constitution has in it a clause that deals with advise and consent. If the oath I took just a few weeks ago to uphold the Constitution means anything, certainly that part of the oath that says I must live up to the Constitution, it says the Senate of the United States has an obligation, legal in nature, to give advice and consent to the President of his nominations. I will continue to do that. I believe that is a role we have.

There are real crises. I have talked about some of them. I talked about others: education, health care, the environment that we do not talk about much anymore. Energy is a crisis we have in this country. The staggering deficit we have developed these past 4 years is a crisis. I believe there are real crises that are crippling our economy, hurting the large and small businesses, and pricing too many families out of quality health care. That is what our legislation we introduce today deals with. We have a Government that has forgotten who it is responsible to, one that has become content with feeding tens of billions to the special interests while failing in its commitment to tens of millions of seniors.

America's promise will not stay alive if America's Government betrays it, and that is why at the outset of this Congress Senate Democrats are committed to restoring the promise of America by pursuing an agenda that honors the values behind it, the values of security, opportunity, and responsibility. These values are at the core of America's promise.

The ten Democratic bills which I will introduce today deal first with America's security. For example, we need to work to increase our Special Operations Forces by 2,000 individuals. We need to expand the pace and scope of programs to eliminate and safeguard nuclear materials and enhance efforts to prevent radioactive and other deadly

materials from entering the United States. That is Nunn-Lugar. We must do more than what we have done with the Nunn-Lugar legislation.

We must increase our military. Our legislation calls for an increase by 40,000—30,000 in the Army and 10,000 in the Marines—so that we have enough troops to win the peace in Iraq and fight terrorism around the world without extending tours of duty to the breaking point.

We will create a Guard and Reserve bill of rights to protect and promote the interests of our dedicated citizen soldiers and fight for the families of those who serve to recognize the sacrifices they have made. S. 13 will fulfill our duty to America's veterans. It will ensure that all veterans get the health care and prescription drugs they deserve while also expanding the availability and accessibility of mental health care. We will ensure that no veteran is forced to choose between a retirement and disability check, and launch a 21st century GI bill that tells soldiers of today that we will help them to succeed when they return, just as we did for those great heroes who returned from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

We need to expand opportunities to all Americans, and economic opportunity is going to be extended through S. 14. We, for example, will end tax incentives that encourage companies to ship jobs overseas. We are going to restore overtime rights for 6 million workers who lost that guarantee last year.

S. 15 will help us with education. It must be a cornerstone of equal opportunity. Democrats will keep our promise to our children by increasing support for preschool education, fully funding No Child Left Behind and making sure it is implemented the right way. We will address the shortfall of math, science, and special education teachers by creating tuition incentives for college students to major in these fields, and we will work to make sure every American who wants it can afford 4 years of college with new tuition tax credits and relief from burdensome loans.

There are problems in rural school districts in Kansas, Nevada, Illinois, Nebraska and Utah. I have found, in my travels through rural Nevada, one of the biggest problems the school districts in rural Nevada have is school buses. That might not seem like much in the overall scheme of things, but it is rare for a bus in Nevada rural schools to be new. They buy used, old buses. Most of the buses are worn out before they get them. We could help rural America in lots of different ways, but we could help rural America so much if we provided a way where they could buy new buses. We need to do that. When school districts have these old buses, children have no choice but to ride in outdated, unsafe buses. That is why we will create a Federal program to help rural school districts pur-

chase new buses that will get kids to school in a reliable and safe manner.

S. 16 will make sure health care is more affordable to families and businesses. We know health care costs have spiraled. That is why we will bring down the price of prescription drugs by legalizing safe importation of FDA-approved prescription drugs from industrialized countries. We will also ensure that every child in America has access to health care and that every pregnant woman in America can get the maternity care she needs and deserves. We will reduce health care costs by creating incentives to modernize health care and by offering tax credits to small businesses.

Finally, we want to build a government that meets its responsibilities both to Americans today and in the future. S. 18 will help America's seniors. Medicare should work for seniors, not the HMOs and drug companies. First we will eliminate the provision that actually prohibits Medicare from using the negotiating power of its 41 million beneficiaries to get lower prices. The Medicare bill has a provision in it that says Medicare cannot negotiate for lower prices. They have to go to Rite Aid and other places, just like the rest of us. They cannot compete with the HMOs which can buy their drugs in bulk.

We will eliminate the giveaways like the \$10 billion slush funds for hospitals in the Medicare bill. We will improve the prescription drug benefit by phasing out the current donut hole where seniors pay a premium but get no credit. Seniors across the country were shocked by the record increase in Medicare Part B premiums this year. This must be addressed. We must be a government that honors its responsibilities to future generations. We have had reckless spending these last 4 years. It has turned record surpluses into record deficits and has mortgaged our children's future. It is long past time for Washington to return to the same commonsense budget that families use around the kitchen table every day, and that is why we will call for pay-as-you-go budgeting.

Our final bill, S. 20, will support women in making responsible choices about their health. The United States has the highest rate of unintended pregnancies among all industrialized nations. Half of all pregnancies in this country are unintended and nearly half of those end in abortion. By increasing access to family planning services, Democrats will improve women's health, reduce the rate of unintended pregnancies, and reduce the number of abortions, all while saving scarce public health dollars.

Security, opportunity, and responsibility—these are more than just three words or three values. They are the foundation on which America's promise is built. Senate Democrats open the 109th Congress steadfastly committed to keeping this promise alive, so that all Americans who work hard can build

a stronger and brighter future for their families. While these 10 bills do not represent all the goals of the 109th Congress, they represent the start and the core of our mission.

No doubt we will tackle many other important issues before Congress closes, but we will never lose sight of the values for which we fight and the promises we must keep.

For instance, when it comes to strengthening Social Security, Democrats will keep America's promise. The program is our bargain that says those who work hard and pay their taxes have earned a secure retirement. Our values compel us to keep the promise of security to our seniors, and Senate Democrats will do this. We will not irresponsibly cut benefits or jeopardize the opportunity of future generations with \$2 trillion in new debt. This is keeping America's promise, and that is what Senate Democrats will do.

In closing, I would like to say a few words to my colleagues across the aisle. We hope and believe many Republicans share our view that we must not allow partisanship to stand in the way of America's promise, or let politics get in the way of keeping alive the American dream. That is our pledge. We will work with the majority in meeting the demands of America.

I recognize the first 30 minutes of morning business time was that of the majority. How much time did I use?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator used 14½ minutes.

Mr. REID. I apologize to my friends on the other side of the aisle. Ten minutes of that will be leader time. The rest Senator DURBIN will use for whatever he feels appropriate when our time comes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Illinois.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is my understanding there are two or three Senators on the floor who would like to pay tribute to Mr. Liebengood, as Senator FRIST did. I will ask unanimous consent they be recognized, if we can get an idea how much time they will use, and then if we could return to the scheduled morning business with the remaining time on the Democrat side and then the balance on the Republican side.

Mr. HAGEL. I will require no more than 3 minutes.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I think I can do mine in 5 minutes, maybe less.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Less than 5 minutes.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I had requested 10 minutes to introduce a bill at the conclusion of the tributes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I apologize. I didn't know people were here to speak. If I had, I would certainly have withheld. There is more than ample time. There is 30 minutes in morning business. They will have whatever time they need. There is lots of time.