

week in terms of our health care initiatives and, second, comment on the 125th anniversary of the Red Cross which is this year.

We have had a good week this week with a relative victory for the American people in terms of the issue of tax relief and the tax package which left here which will create jobs. The bottom line is, a good economy with 5 million jobs created in the last 30 or so months. Unemployment is down to 4.7 percent, which is lower than the average of the 1960s, the 1970s, the 1980s or the 1990s. Homeownership is doing well, with minority homeownership at an alltime high.

We have good, solid economic growth. That is, in large part, first and foremost, due to the hard work, entrepreneurial spirit of the American people, no doubt. But in terms of the policy standpoint, it is because of the progrowth tax policy put forward by President Bush that this Congress has followed. Indeed, we followed it again this week in addressing issues surrounding tax policy on capital gains and dividends and keeping the alternative minimum tax from reaching out and grabbing another 7 million people this year. The President will sign that bill next week which will give us another opportunity to celebrate the great victory for the American people.

Most of the time this week was spent on an issue that I feel passionately about, I think most people in this Senate do, the health care of Americans. Without health, one cannot do very much in life. We need that healthy body, that healthy mind for being able to be productive.

We have a system today that has too many gaps in it. The greatest health care system in the world, one that I have been a beneficiary of in my own field of heart and lung transplantation and the treatment of heart disease and lung disease, but there are huge gaps in our health care system today that lead to less quality, less access, higher costs, gaps that are so obvious that they do require action on our part.

This week we tried to take two of those, to keep focused on those two, and other Members want to grab all the other different challenges and challenging issues and pull them in. The only way to make progress in this Senate is to stay focused on an issue and move to the next issue and the next issue and pull together the very best.

The first issue was medical liability. We, on this side of the aisle, voted to lower the cost of medicine by controlling, in some manner, the out-of-control litigation costs, what has become a litigation lottery—a system today that because of medical liability premiums, because of frivolous lawsuits, because of the incentives given to the trial lawyers out there, the more predatory trial lawyers who are out there, punishes expectant mothers who are delivering children by driving obstetricians out of county and out-of-state, causes neurosurgeons to no longer take

trauma calls at night, closing down obstetrical wards. We have to get that under control. It is apparent from debate, this side of the aisle voted in favor of commonsense reform and the other side voted against it.

Then we moved to the issue of expanding health care coverage for millions of uninsured people in this country, focusing on the small businesses today that simply do not have the purchasing clout that larger organizations have, that the big companies have. It is sad because we have small businesses that are the engine of economic growth in this country that operate on very small margins, that simply cannot afford to offer health care today but allowing them to group together in larger and larger groups, we have that clout to bring the costs down.

In both of those instances, the Democrats chose to obstruct on motions to proceed so we could not fully debate those issues. To me, it is a disappointment. It means millions of people will have access to health care that is not as affordable as it might be or they have no access at all, especially those with small businesses.

Reforming our health care system, eliminating the gaps, getting rid of the waste, fraud, and abuse in our health care system today, the best health care system in the world, in terms of what we can do, has got to be a goal of this Senate. We as Republicans have led on that. We got a majority vote in the Senate, but we were unable to reach that 60-vote threshold.

The 46 million people who do not have health insurance in this country are a major concern to me because it is such a large gap. We have addressed it in the past in an incremental way with some success in health savings accounts, which I will come back to. The problem is we have so many tangled regulations, we have complicated bureaucracies out there with overlapping responsibility. We have an insurance market that is getting choked. A lot of it comes from excessive mandates. One mandate put on another, on another, on another, and if you put all the mandates in there, the cost of insurance for everyone goes up. Then it is out of reach of the small business person or the person who has a modest income.

We will keep pressing forward. We on this side of the aisle, Republicans, recognize that our health care system lacks some of the fundamental mechanisms that are required in order to get rid of the waste, fraud, and abuse to make it more transparent, to make it more efficient. We have to be able to harness the transparency, having the 21st century information out there in order for people to make good decisions so that individuals can make more choices. We have hundreds of millions of health care decisions being made, all of which drive toward better access and higher quality and lower cost.

If we look out to where we want to be going as we address medical liability, which is killing our system, as we ad-

dress the small business health reform, it is for a 21st century health care system that is driven by that information, that is out there that is available today, that is driven by choice, it is driven by that element of control.

Health care should not be a red State, blue State, Democratic, Republican, liberal, conservative matter. We have to come together. We did so with the health savings accounts, I mentioned few moments ago; accounts where an individual has a deductible plan where you can save for you only, you take it with you, you control it. The decisions you make have an impact, and they have been very successful. Three million people today have health savings accounts. None had health savings accounts 3 years ago. And most of the 3 million people had no health insurance in the past. So it begins to chip away at that large number of uninsured people in this country.

Another issue we have passed in this Senate in a bipartisan way is electronic medical records, information technology so that we can develop a platform on which we can make good choices, transparent choices, and can be held accountable. There is a communication among hospitals and doctors and consumers and patients which, with that communication, gets rid of all the waste. That has the obvious ability, through electronic medical records, to have seamless health care no matter where people are. If you are in an accident in Kentucky and you are from Tennessee, your doctor at that trauma hospital can immediately know something about you, what your blood type is, what your allergies are, what medicines you are on, by a push of a button. Now this is done through fax machines and phone calls or going to the basement for records of hospitals and clinics to retrieve information.

We passed that in the Senate. The House has not yet addressed that issue. But, again, it is another example of where this Senate can work together, as with the health savings accounts, that we can pass legislation that is to the benefit of all Americans. That is real progress. We can make progress.

I am disappointed in this week that we did not have the other side of the aisle participating in these very important issues. But we will continue to address them as we move ahead.

RED CROSS ANNIVERSARY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I mentioned a second issue, and that is the 125th anniversary of the American Red Cross. This year is 125 years of voluntarism. We have seen it in our own lives, especially in the Katrina episode over the last year.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity of going in front of the Capitol. My office actually looks out over the Mall, and there is a big red tent with the big Red Cross on it. I have been watching that tent for the last several days. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to speak to

probably 400 or 500 volunteers who had come from around the country from their various Red Cross entities, I assume from about every State in the country.

I mention this because volunteers are the lifeblood of the American Red Cross. I have seen it directly in my own life, both as a doctor, as a physician, of course, as a citizen, as well as a Senator. These volunteers affected my life in a very direct way. I told them yesterday, as I ran the multiorgan transplant center at Vanderbilt, we did heart transplants, we did lung transplants, bone marrow transplants, we transplanted pancreases, we transplanted livers, transplanted kidneys. None of that could take place without the Red Cross because all of the blood that is required in terms of transfusions—liver transplants especially, probably heart transplants, secondly, and lung transplants, all of that blood comes from where? The Red Cross, from volunteers who manage the Red Cross facility and from the people who actually donate their blood.

I would not have done all of the heart transplants I have done if it were not for the Red Cross, the volunteers associated with the Red Cross. People do not think about how much we depend on the volunteers.

Jump, fast forward, 15 years and go to New Orleans. About 3 days after the levees broke, I was in New Orleans, more as a physician, as a volunteer, than as a Senator. I was in the airport there in September with evacuees who lost everything—their medicines, sometimes their family members, clothes, their home. Sitting there on the baggage belts, coming in on the baggage carts, being unloaded from helicopters, all they needed at that point in time was someone to talk to, for the most part—some needed medical help—someone to talk to and a hot meal to be comforted, some semblance of security, having lost everything.

So who was there? Who was there right up front? It was the Red Cross. Once again, and almost instantaneously, shelters sprung up in Tennessee. But Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, and Texas, of course, all opened their doors to the gulf coast evacuees.

By the end of that week, 675 Red Cross shelters had opened up in 23 States, which was the single largest response to a natural disaster in Red Cross history. Remarkable. Remarkable.

Then, jump forward about a few months to what happened last month in Tennessee. We had tornadoes that came right through middle Tennessee and all through west Tennessee about 2 or 3 weeks apart. Thousands of homes were damaged. Many people lost their lives.

Once again, it was the Red Cross that came in and set their trucks, had food cooked, talked to people, arranged for places for people to stay who had just lost their homes. There were tens of

thousands of meals served. People were taken care of. And there was mental health care in terms of the devastation people felt, the depression people felt. They came to that Red Cross van to be able to talk to somebody.

I mention those three examples because I have seen them. I saw it in Tennessee when I was back there talking to people whose homes had been destroyed. I saw it in New Orleans, 3 days after those levees broke. And I saw it for years and years and years, for 20 years of my life, when I saw it every day, working in hospitals, with that donation of blood.

It is the 125th anniversary of the Red Cross. They had a gala last night. Karyn, my wife, was one of the co-chairs for that gala. We were there to see the generosity of people who have volunteered and also have contributed. One person who was honored last night had given \$9 million—one person had given \$9 million—to the Red Cross.

It takes a lot of people working together. But all of that does provide a symbol of hope and compassion and strength and endurance. It is going to take the continued commitment of those volunteers to continue that, so I do want to thank you, those of you who might be listening who have volunteered and will volunteer for the American Red Cross.

MOTHER'S DAY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, one last item, a very important statement, and then we will close down. But it is very important and people will recognize why.

This Sunday, millions of families around the world will celebrate their moms. I was changing my reservations around. I know a lot of people are scurrying around for reservations. I should be cooking at home that day, I guess, but I am looking for an appropriate place for reservations, shifting it from Sunday afternoon to Sunday evening.

Restaurants will be packed on Sunday. Living rooms will be packed full, crammed full of aunts and uncles and fidgety children.

Families will warmly “remember when” to show their moms they love them. I have three boys, and they let me know all the time how much they love their mom. But I don't know where all three boys are going to be. They are going to be traveling all over the country today, so I am trying to get them together as well—all the challenges of Mother's Day.

Mother's Day, as we all know, is the busiest long distance calling day of the year. It accounts for more than one-fifth of all the floral purchases made for the holidays that 1 day.

We typically start the day by going to church and then gathering either in the afternoon or the evening—a tradition that millions and millions and millions of people will celebrate and have celebrated over the years.

The celebrations of our moms have gone back millennia. The ancient

Greeks celebrated a holiday in honor of a mythological mother of gods. Ancient Romans celebrated their mother goddess symbol. In the British Isles and Celtic Europe, the people honored the goddess Brigid in a spring celebration of motherhood.

Mother's Day in America got its start in West Virginia in 1858, led by Anna Reeves Jarvis, a local schoolteacher. After years of strenuous petitioning, Mother's Day finally became an official American holiday in 1914. It was passed by the U.S. Congress as a joint resolution and signed by President Woodrow Wilson.

Today, 90 years later, Mother's Day is celebrated all over the world—all over the world—including Denmark, Finland, Italy, Turkey, Australia, and Belgium.

It is celebrated by the humble and by the proud throughout the ages and across continents.

Abraham Lincoln said of his mom:

All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother.

Human nature does bind us to our mothers. The Bible instructs us to respect and obey them. Mothers give us the gift we can never return—life itself.

I will close with a quote by the basketball legend Kareem Abdul Jabar. His mom knew him well, and I suspect never stopped looking after him. He once confessed:

My mother had to send me to the movies with my birth certificate, so that I wouldn't have to pay the extra fifty cents the adults had to pay.

I do want to wish a happy Mother's Day to all of the mothers of the world.

To my own mother, who I miss very much, her daily image comes down on just about everything I do in terms of what she might have done, what she would do, what she would whisper into my ear to do.

To my own wife, Karyn, the mother of our three boys, Jonathan, Harrison, and Bryan, I say thank you, I love you. You are the rock that holds our family together and makes everything possible.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID WILLIAMS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to the Kentucky Senate President, David Williams. He is a master legislator, a fighter for the people of Kentucky, and a true friend.

David has served the people of the 16th Senate District since 1987, and has served as Senate President since 2000. In his leadership position, he is one of the dominant figures in Kentucky politics. David and I have worked together on many issues important to the Commonwealth over the years, and I have always been impressed by his knowledge, ability, and talent to persuade others. David defends his ideas and his principles well, and as a result has positively influenced much of the legislation that comes out of the state capital.

Every Kentuckian benefits from having David Williams as Senate President. This year, the Kentucky State