

started this program, should we not take a more restrained and careful approach?

Rather than drawing lines in the sand and threatening the termination of benefits of their health care to poor kids, shouldn't the majority leader, the Speaker of the House, the President of the United States, and the folks on the Republican side of the aisle sit down and try to work it out?

As I said, everybody in Congress supports this program, virtually without exception. The only difference is between those who believe this is an irresponsible, radical expansion of the program beyond recognition, and one that others have offered—including me—is a reauthorization of the program designed to meet its original target, and that is poor and low-income kids.

I hope the leadership will listen and make a sincere attempt to try to meet in the middle on this. The children of this country will benefit, and I think the American people will be enormously relieved.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Texas for leading the national dialog on health care. I think Americans expect us to address this issue and not just fight about it, as the Senator from Texas has said.

This national discussion is bringing us to some agreement, at least. I think all of us have decided in Congress—or at least most of us—that every American should have access to a health insurance policy they can afford and own and keep. Where we disagree is how we get to that point. I think the disagreement in this body goes to how we do that. Do we do it more like Canada did, where we say, OK, everybody needs to have insurance, so let's let the Government take it over; let's have Government-run health care?

Some are saying the Canadian system works fine, until you talk to doctors and patients from Canada and find out that every year the waiting lines get longer, every year the program gets more expensive, and every year the health care is of less quality. So now the people in Canada who have the means come to the United States to get health care.

The reason we have had such good health care in the United States for most of our history is that it has been done by private doctors working with patients, hospitals that are independent of Government; our free enterprise system has worked to a great degree.

Government programs, such as Medicare and the program we are talking about today, such as the children's health plan, have helped those in need to buy health insurance and have access to health care. But for the most part, Americans have resisted Government-run health care.

We do know in the early nineties there was an attempt to move totally

to Government health care. When that failed, we were able to see that the advocates of Government-run health care believed the best way to get to Government health care was to do it one step at a time with the children first because it is very hard to vote against expanding health care for children.

Certainly, all children should have health care. They should have health insurance. But the fact is, every American should have health insurance, and it is not good enough just to expand a Government program from covering poor kids to covering middle-class kids.

We do not need to mistake the fact that this is moving us toward Government health care. If my Democratic colleagues get their way on this children's health bill, over 70 percent of the children in this country are going to have Government health care. What happens to them once they become adults we have not discussed. We need to help every American own a health insurance policy.

What Republicans want to do is continue this children's health plan, to add additional funding to cover inflation and additional children. We have some good proposals. One of them, by Senator MARTINEZ, would continue the program as it is but also offer tax credits to children and families who are 200 and 300 percent of poverty so they can buy their own insurance, believing that the best thing we can do for families in this country is to help them have insurance they can afford, own, and keep.

There are other Republican proposals that we will be talking about that include tax credits for every family who buys their own insurance. It would also allow employers to give money to individuals to help buy their insurance. We do not do that now. Employers are not allowed to contribute to an individual's health plan.

We also have proposals that would allow individuals to shop for health insurance all over the country. A lot of folks don't know that we don't allow that now. You can only shop in your own State.

There is a proposal that would allow people who put tax-free money in a health savings account to use that money to buy their own health insurance plan. It is pretty amazing that as a Congress, we will not allow people to use their own health savings account to pay for health insurance premiums. And there are proposals to allow small businesses to come together to buy health insurance that is less expensive than when they buy it individually.

There is a lot we can do as a Congress that does not cost taxpayers any money but would make it easier for individuals to have health insurance they can afford, own, and keep.

I hope this debate will continue to open this issue in a way that Americans can really understand. The goal is that everyone has affordable health insurance, good health insurance. The goal is not to turn more and more of

our health care and health insurance over to the Government because we know that won't work, we know it is not efficient, and we know the children we are trying to help are eventually going to have to pay the debt we put on their heads by paying for something we cannot afford.

The fact is, we can get better health insurance, better health care for less money, if we do it with private health insurance just by helping individuals buy health insurance they can afford, own, and keep.

We started the national discussion on health care. I hope as we look at this debate, specifically children's health care, that we will see it as part of a larger issue and decide today that it is not good enough just to get a few more children insured.

Every American needs a health insurance policy, and we can do it, first of all, by taking down the barriers that Congress has put in front of individuals when they are trying to buy their own insurance, but we can also look at those in need. Whether it is tax credits or tax deductions, we can help every American have a health insurance policy they can afford, that they can keep from job to job and throughout their life. We can have better health care, and it is better for our future.

I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to speak. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time for morning business be extended by 5 minutes for each side.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for 5 minutes, and that following my presentation, Senator CHAMBLISS from Georgia have the remaining 5 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WATER MANAGEMENT

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, we pass lots of laws in the Congress of the United States, and from time to time there is a byproduct of the passage of some of those laws. It is called the law of unintended consequences. Such is the case with the Endangered Species Act.

In my State of Georgia, we are in a level 4, 100-year drought. As many as 7 million citizens in my State are looking at the possibility of there being no drinking water in less than 120 days. Our State has imposed restrictions of every kind. Landscapers are out of business, car washes are threatened, and there is no outdoor watering.

My home county of Cobb, in the last 14 days, has reduced, through conservation, water consumption by 20 percent.

I personally commend commission chairman Sam Owens and the entire North Georgia Water Planning District for everything they are doing. But in the absence of rain, there is nothing we can do.

Why does this affect the Endangered Species Act? Very simply because a court case was filed a few years ago under the Endangered Species Act asking for the management of the Chattahoochee River basin to be controlled so as to protect sturgeon. The judge in that case finally ruled as much and developed the judge's own interim operating plan for the Chattahoochee River. That plan means the Corps of Engineers makes releases to keep the flow in the Chattahoochee River where the sturgeon exist at a level sufficient to sustain the sturgeon. The problem is the level is insufficient to sustain human life in North Georgia if it continues.

This morning, just a few minutes ago, on behalf of myself and Senator CHAMBLISS, I introduced an amendment to the Endangered Species Act to deal with this law of unintended consequences. It very simply says the following: The head of the Army Corps of Engineers or the Governor of a State, within which a region lies where there is a drought that threatens the health, safety, and welfare of the people in that region, may suspend the course and effect of the Endangered Species Act until that endangerment has passed.

It is a simple request. We are at a place in time in our country and in a region, my home region, the State I represent, where the health, safety, and welfare of my people are threatened. They are threatened by an act this Congress passed that had no intention to threaten them. If we have the power to do that, we also have the power to make the exception to see to it that their drinking water is safe and their livelihood is safe and at hand.

This is a critical, critical emergency. It is time sensitive. I urge each Member of the Senate to follow this simple amendment and this simple proposal and think about what they might do if it was their State, if it was their people. It is time we gave the Army Corps the latitude and the Governors of the States the authority to protect our people.

I stood in this Chamber 3 years ago and raised my right hand and agreed to defend the Constitution of the United States and protect the domestic tranquility from enemies foreign and domestic. Today I stand recognizing there is a domestic enemy, and that enemy is the Endangered Species Act which controls the Chattahoochee River and limits access to drinking water and safe water for the people of north Georgia. I urge Members of the Senate to join myself and Senator CHAMBLISS in this critical and important amendment.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I join my colleague, Senator ISAKSON from Georgia, in support of this legislation. Georgia is in a critical time in the history of our State. Atlanta, GA, is a great place to live, a great place to work, a great place to visit, but we are in a crisis. The water supply system for metropolitan Atlanta depends on two basins, Lake Altoona and Lake Lanier. Lake Altoona and Lake Lanier are fed by nature, by rainfall that every year, thus far in the history of those basins, has filled those basins since they were built decades ago.

Unfortunately, during the month of August, we received very little moisture. But at the time we were receiving very little moisture, we had more 100-degree day temperatures than we have ever had in the history of Atlanta. A combination of natural forces has put us in this situation of crisis, but there is also an unnatural source that has helped produce this crisis, and the legislation that Senator ISAKSON has proposed, along with my cosponsorship, seeks to address this critical problem and seeks to help find a solution to this problem for the short term.

Georgia's lakes are low and continue to decline as the Army Corps of Engineers releases water to protect a handful of sturgeons and mussels in the Appalachian Bay in the State of Florida. Understandably, folks who have had mandatory water restrictions for months in our State, who are watching these lakes slowly decrease, are wondering where the common sense in Washington has gone. They are calling my office and asking: How can our Government care more about mussels and sturgeons than human beings? Obviously, that is not the case. But water continues to be released, and estimates are that Lake Lanier, Atlanta's main source of water, will be empty—and I repeat, will be empty—by January 2008 if the Corps does not stop releasing so much water or if we do not get rainfall. That is less than 3 months away.

It is clear that we are in a crisis. We need to do something to ensure we are not cutting off the drinking supply to 7 million people in the metropolitan Atlanta area. This legislation does something very simple and practical to address this crisis in the short term. It says, if the Secretary of the Army, in consultation with the Governor of a State, determines that a drought is in effect in a region in which there is a Federal river basin that is managed by the Corps of Engineers, and the drought threatens the health, safety, and welfare of the human population in that region, the Secretary of the Army can temporarily suspend provisions of the Endangered Species Act until such time as the drought is over and the health, safety, and welfare of humans is no longer at risk.

We have larger issues to address in the long term. Updating the water control manuals by which the Corps of Engineers operates the river basins in Georgia and getting the Governors of

our neighboring States together to apportion the water among the States for the long term are critical issues that have to be addressed.

As resources get scarce, these things become more difficult to accomplish. Unfortunately, the people of Georgia cannot wait. They need immediate relief, and swift passage of this legislation will certainly help.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is my understanding that the majority has time now under morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Thirty-five minutes.

Mr. DURBIN. I ask for 10 minutes of that time, and I ask to be notified when I have completed 4 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to discuss two issues this morning that I believe are important not only to Members of the Senate but everybody across America.

You cannot go home and visit your home State and talk to real families and real businessmen and real workers without coming back feeling that the No. 1 issue on their minds, after the war in Iraq, is health care. Time and again people tell us stories from their own lives, troubling, challenging stories about trying to find the best health care and pay for it. They are concerned about the cost of health insurance. The cost of health insurance goes up every single year and covers less each year. That is the real family squeeze in America.

It isn't just from families we hear these stories. We will learn the same thing with businesses. Howard Schultz is a fellow I respect very much. He is a pretty prosperous man in America. A lot of us buy his products with frequency. Howard Schultz of Brooklyn, NY, now living in Seattle, is the owner of Starbucks. When he started a little company selling coffee, I don't know if he had any idea that someday he would have 14,000 stores across America. But he knew if he started a company, there was one thing he was going to do. He was going to guarantee everybody who worked in a Starbucks store had health insurance because he had a personal experience after his father lost health insurance after being laid off from a job, and he decided as a business leader that he would take care of that issue.

So if you pay an extra 50 cents to a buck for that double, double skim latte, you are subsidizing the health insurance of the person making the coffee for you. I think it is a pretty good deal. It is a deal I am willing to make regularly and do most mornings.

Howard Schultz said to me and Members of the Senate: I cannot keep up with the cost of health insurance. The