

State, political subdivision, authority, agency, instrumentality, or other entity is an eligible lender under subsection (d), and such State, political subdivision, authority, agency, instrumentality, or other entity is the sole beneficial owner of such loan and the income from such loan.”;

(E) in subparagraph (D), by striking “an entity described in described in paragraph (1)(A), (B), or (C)” and inserting “a State, political subdivision, authority, agency, instrumentality, or other entity described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of paragraph (1), regardless of whether such State, political subdivision, authority, agency, instrumentality, or other entity is an eligible lender under subsection (d),”; and

(F) by amending subparagraph (E) to read as follows:

“(E) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—For purposes of subparagraphs (A), (B), (C), and (D) of this paragraph, a State, political subdivision, authority, agency, instrumentality, or other entity described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of paragraph (1), regardless of whether such State, political subdivision, authority, agency, instrumentality, or other entity is an eligible lender under subsection (d), shall not—

“(i) be deemed to be owned or controlled, in whole or in part, by a for-profit entity; or

“(ii) lose its status as the sole owner of a beneficial interest in a loan and the income from a loan,

by such State, political subdivision, authority, agency, instrumentality, or other entity, or by the trustee described in paragraph (1)(D), granting a security interest in, or otherwise pledging as collateral, such loan, or the income from such loan, to secure a debt obligation for which such State, political subdivision, authority, agency, instrumentality, or other entity is the issuer of the debt obligation.”.

CONGRATULATING THE BOSTON RED SOX

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, it is good to be back in the Senate after a brief absence due to some health issues. I am enormously appreciative to the people of Massachusetts, for all of their thoughts and good wishes and prayers that were extended to me. I am very thankful to so many of our colleagues, on this side of the aisle and on the other side as well, who wished me well. As a matter of fact, there were a number of those on the other side of the aisle who urged me to take even additional time, that the Senate could function very well without my attendance. I appreciate their good thoughts, but we are back in business and ready to deal with the important issues at hand.

One of the very important issues at hand is reminding the country of the extraordinary achievement and accomplishment by a magnificent sports team from my home city of Boston, MA. The country knows about it, but I know Senator KERRY joins with me in taking a moment to say how much we are cheering them on, on this magnificent, beautiful day in Boston. Our greatest regret is missing what they call the “rolling rally” that will celebrate the World Series victory of our beloved Red Sox. It is going to be an absolutely spectacular day in Boston.

Both of us, Senator KERRY and I, are very grateful to the Senate for last night passing this wonderful resolution that expressed all of our feelings about the Boston Red Sox and their success this year. It is an extraordinary record. For the millions of members of the Red Sox nation, this year has been a dream come true. We are proud of the team and what they have accomplished, especially the way they came back after trailing the Cleveland Indians by some three games to one in the American League Championship Series and went on to win seven straight games.

It was an exciting season full of brilliant performances, but none of them were as touching as the extraordinary—and it was extraordinary—performance by Jon Lester, the great pitcher for the Boston Red Sox, who pitched 5½ shutout innings in game four on Sunday night, less than 1 year after being treated with lymphoma. For thousands of families struggling with cancer, his example is truly an inspiration.

I congratulate the Colorado Rockies as well. They showed us what can be achieved when everyone pulls together, winning an incredible 21 out of 22 games to reach the World Series and making history in the process. I have no doubt their team will have a brilliant future.

So, congratulations, Red Sox, for a job brilliantly done in 2007. It is a wonderful year for baseball in Boston. We are enormously grateful to the whole team for an inspiring and exciting season and we look forward to another great year in 2008.

AMTRAK

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I strongly support the Passenger Rail Improvement and Investment Act. I commend the bill’s managers, Senators LAUTENBERG and LOTT, for their leadership on this issue, and I am proud to be an original sponsor of this important legislation.

Effective passenger rail service is more essential than ever at this time when gas prices, the Nation’s economy, and our environment are on everyone’s mind.

For decades, Amtrak has given the Nation a safe, reliable and energy efficient alternative.

Now, we must make the necessary investments in passenger rail service to preserve this important transportation option.

The pending bill gives Amtrak the funds it needs to continue operating and make necessary repairs.

It couldn’t be timelier, because more and more Americans are choosing passenger rail. Recently Amtrak reported its highest ridership ever—nearly 26 million passengers in 2007.

It is particularly gratifying that the bill gives special priority to the overburdened Northeast Corridor, allowing it to return to a state of good repair by 2012.

Rail transit has long been an important part of Massachusetts’ public transportation system. Boston’s Green Line—110 years old—is the oldest subway system in North America. The Northeast Corridor is the backbone of Amtrak today, serving 10 million passengers.

An excellent example of why this bill is so important is the Downeaster, which operates between Boston and Portland, ME. The Downeaster launched its service at the end of 2001, and it has already carried over 1.5 million passengers. The line is so popular that it recently added a fifth daily round trip to meet the demand.

We need to continue to expand these options for the good of our economy and the environment. Public transportation creates thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in revenue.

The number of light rail systems has tripled in the past 35 years, and heavy rail service has nearly doubled. We need to do much more, however, to make public transportation a viable option if we are going to end the Nation’s addiction to oil and reduce the harm being done to our environment from greenhouse gas emissions.

Of the 20 million barrels of oil America consumes daily, more than 60 percent is consumed by the transportation sector. Public transportation today saves us 1.4 billion gallons of gasoline each year, which translates into 108 million fewer cars filling up.

Equally important, these investments relieve the growing congestion on our roads. The Texas Transportation Institute’s latest Urban Mobility Report found that congestion is costing the Nation \$78 billion a year and forcing the average driver to waste 38 hours in traffic, while burning 26 gallons of gasoline. In the greater Boston area, travelers face even longer traffic delays in a year—spending 46 hours stuck in traffic and wasting over 30 gallons of gasoline.

These delays help explain why more and more people are choosing Amtrak. Earlier this year, Amtrak reported that its Acela line—which operates between Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington—had an on-time performance record of nearly 90 percent, and nearly a 25 percent increase in ridership.

Those are strong results. The pending bill will make the system even stronger, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. President, as I make these comments about the Amtrak legislation, I remember very well a former colleague of ours who is not here. He has his own particular health challenges. He is a beloved figure—Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island, author of the Pell grants, author of the National Endowment for the Arts, author of the National Endowment for the Humanities, author of the Seabed Treaty that did so much in terms of arms control and the placement of weapons on the seabeds—there is a whole legacy there.

But President Kennedy said, during his Presidency, that as a student of history it was extremely rare that any individual Member of the Senate could come up with a new idea and then see a real downpayment on that particular program. This is the case with regard to Amtrak. Claiborne Pell was the first voice in terms of rapid transportation between Boston and Washington. He struggled for that program, and during the early 1960s he was actually able to get some resources—not very great amounts—but for the study of it, for the feasibility of it, and for building a sense of inevitability about it.

He saw, long before others did, the importance of transportation, this rapid transportation for our Nation as an energy saver, for the movement of people. He anticipated our congestion and so many issues that have been talked about by two of our colleagues and friends, Senator LAUTENBERG and Senator LOTT, who deserve great commendation for their efforts and for their leadership.

We are reminded—with the explosion of the costs of gasoline, congestion, environmental issues—about the importance of this legislation. Many times over the last 40-odd years, this legislation was at risk. But now it is well established, not only for the corridors which are highly populated, but we are seeing, as has been pointed out at other times during the debate, other examples of this kind of rapid movement of individuals between various population centers and the difference it has made and contribution it has made in terms of not only passenger service but also for our economy and the environment and the use of energy.

SCHIP

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to comment on an issue about which I have spoken frequently over the last 10 years, but one which I feel immensely strongly about, that will be before the Senate and on the national agenda in these next several hours. I will draw attention to its importance to the future of our Nation and particularly to the children of this Nation.

I know there has been a good debate and a good discussion. I have spoken frequently about it, but I welcome the chance to once more, as Americans are beginning once again to refocus on this issue. It takes time. There are so many different issues that are before the Senate, and it does take time. We have to repeat and come back to these issues. It does not surprise me. We have seen it other times.

I was here in 1964 when we failed to pass the Medicare Program. I can remember the whole stream of our colleagues going down to the radio and television gallery issuing their press releases about their opposition to Medicare. And then, about 8 months later—I think it was about 8 months later—the Senate revisited the Medicare Program, and it passed overwhelmingly.

The one great difference, in that period of time, was the election of 1964, when American people gave focus and attention to the issue of Medicare and made the judgment and decision we ought to go and move ahead. I have heard all those arguments, “socialized medicine,” “Government-controlled program.” We heard that when this program was initially introduced.

Senator HATCH, myself, and others, we have heard those echoes time in and time out. But it was under the leadership of Senator HATCH, the judgment and decision, in terms of providing the help and assistance to these children would not be replication of the Medicaid Program but would be a program that would be basically run by the States, with an outline by the Congress about what would be included in terms of services.

It was a program that was built upon the private companies in these various States. It was a program also that did not quite match the range of different services that were in the Medicaid Program but, nonetheless, has been invaluable in terms of these children.

I come to the Senate floor today to speak about the health insurance, not the health insurance available to Senators or Members of the House or the President and his Cabinet. As I was reminded again during my recent experience, we have access to excellent insurance to pay the cost of whatever care we need. Our health coverage is never in question.

I speak of those who do not work in marbled halls or beneath vaulted ceilings but of those who work at the local bakery or the repair shop or make their living stocking shelves or cleaning offices. This debate is about our commitment to millions of American men and women who work hard every day, pay taxes, care for their children but who stay awake at night worrying because they cannot afford the costs of sudden illness.

It used to be when we debated this issue, 10, 15, 20 years ago, we would talk about the cost of an emergency room visit being \$250 and wondering whether a child was \$250 sick. That is the cost of going to an emergency room. And we used to debate about how do you measure the pain, the anxiety, the anguish that parent has, wondering whether their child is \$250 sick; whether they will get better tomorrow, whether that earache will expand or be an indicator of a more serious illness or that throat ailment may be the same or whether that child would get better.

Now it is a \$475 average across this country. That is what this children's health insurance debate is all about: Healthy lives for children, peace of mind for parents, Congress acting for the common good.

CHIP is not a Republican idea or a Democratic idea, it is not a State program or a Federal initiative, it is not public sector or private sector, it is all of those things and more. CHIP is an American success story.

Mr. President, how much time do I have remaining?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has 18½ minutes remaining.

Mr. KENNEDY. Over the past decade, since it was first enacted, we have seen what it can do to transform young lives. Since then the percentage of uninsured children has dropped from almost 23 percent in 1997 to 14 percent in 2005. This is a clear indication of what this program is about, from just below 25 percent uninsured for children—this is 1997—look where it is now, 13 percent.

What we see in other charts, if you talk about what has been the growth to uninsured adults, it would be the opposite. It would be going the other way. This is a success story.

There is an old saying familiar to every first-year law student:

If the law is against you, you pound the facts. If the facts are against you, pound the law. If the law and the facts are against you, you pound the table.

The President and his supporters in Congress have been pounding the table hard and often on this issue in recent months. It is time to set the record straight. They have pounded the table about all the families making \$83,000 a year who are supposedly eligible for CHIP. Let me tell you how many families making \$83,000 a year are enrolled in CHIP: None.

None in Massachusetts, none in New York, none in New Jersey, none in California, nowhere, zero, not a single child in a family making \$83,000 is eligible for CHIP.

The new bill approved by the House last Thursday goes even further than current law. It makes it illegal to cover anyone in families making over \$62,000 a year, or 300 percent of the poverty level.

There it is, in big black letters, on page 75 of the bill:

Denial of Payments for Children with Effective Family Income that Exceeds 300 Percent of the Poverty Line.

Now, according to the Congressional Research Service, 91 percent of the children covered by CHIP are in families with incomes below 200 percent of the poverty level, or \$41,000 a year for a family of four. Almost all of the 9 percent of families above this level pay premiums to defray the cost of coverage for their children. That was a key part of the CHIP program.

States will have a right to make judgments and decisions, to be able to vary the premiums, the deductibles, and the copays. We let the States do that for those who would benefit from the program at this particular level.

The need for genuine outreach to more of the low-income children is a serious problem. But it is a foolish solution to address it by denying CHIP to children who also need it.

Facts are stubborn things, and all the table pounding in the world cannot change them. The basic fact of CHIP is it began as a principled, bipartisan