

class families save money—perhaps to invest in a small business or pay for college tuition for their children—it helps spur economic and job growth as well.

Last week I introduced legislation, along with Senator PAT ROBERTS of Kansas, that extends for 2 years the \$4,000 above-the-line deduction for taxpayers who pay for college tuition. We frequently talk about the importance of education on the younger generation, from elementary school through college and beyond. We talk about the importance of continuing education, literally lifetime learning, in order for us to maintain and extend our global competitiveness. Aside from simply encouraging people to pursue a college education, we ought to do our best to make college more affordable and accessible and less of a burden on working parents who want to send their kids to college. Originally part of the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001, this deduction allows taxpayers to deduct up to \$4,000 from their Federal income tax return regardless of whether they itemize deductions or not. This deduction goes a long way to help families struggling to put their children through college and benefits millions of taxpayers annually.

According to the College Board, this deduction, along with grants and other education incentives, has helped lower the cost for the average student who goes to a public university by \$3,600 and \$9,300 for those who attend a private college. Both of these deductions keep money in the pockets of taxpayers. In my State of Texas, they allow them to pay for things such as health care, clothing and food, things they need and ought to be able to use their hard-earned money to pay for, rather than writing a bigger check to Uncle Sam. It is appropriate to use the IRS Code not only to provide for fundamental fairness when it comes to allowing the deduction of State and local sales tax from a Federal income tax return; it is also appropriate to use the IRS Code to provide for further educational opportunity.

Right now taxpayers have to work a total of 120 days, about a third of the year, to pay their tax burden, whether it is Federal, State, or local taxes. The last thing we should do is force taxpayers to work more hours, longer days for Uncle Sam and not for their family. Rather than waiting for some future bill to hopefully address this need, the Senate should extend these taxpayer-friendly provisions today. I hope we will have another opportunity to come back to the floor, and I urge the Senate to extend these two important provisions in the near future.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2007—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 3963, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A motion to proceed to the bill (H.R. 3963) to amend title XXI of the Social Security Act to extend and improve the Children's Health Insurance Program, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

DEMOCRACY FOR CUBA

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I am happy to join my colleague from Florida, Senator MARTINEZ, to express outrage at the continued injustice carried out by the Castro regime inside of Cuba and to highlight that we are at a critical time for democracy inside of Cuba. This past Monday, as many of us were sipping coffee and driving to work, 70 young Cuban dissidents were arrested, detained, and harassed. Ten have been released but others remain detained.

What was their crime that got them arrested? Were they destroying property? Were they stealing food? Were they acting violently? No, none of that. They were walking down a street in Havana, and while they were peacefully walking down that street together, they had on their arms this wristband—this wristband, a simple white wristband—that has one word written on it, “cambio,” which in Spanish means “change.”

This one simple gesture was strong enough to have them thrown in prison. This one simple gesture was strong enough to have them detained and harassed. But I also hope this one gesture would be strong enough to inspire us and to inspire those who love freedom and democracy and have respect for human rights around the globe.

This incident was not isolated. These youth knew the consequences their actions might very well bring them—this simple statement of wearing a white wristband that says “change.” Decades of repression has led to decades of fear. But these young people did not show fear. They showed courage and, I think, showed us where they want Cuba to go. They want it to change.

Their courage must not fall on deaf ears. We are listening and watching. From the Senate floor to the White House we are inspired by what these young people have shown us. They have shown us that Cuba can and will change, and this change will come from within Cuba, from the Cuban people themselves, from its youth. But they need our help, and we must continue to

fight here to do what we can to empower them and to acknowledge them when they empower themselves.

We also have to build on this momentum. Just like last week, President Bush said:

The operative word in our future dealings with Cuba is not stability. The operative word is freedom.

One of Cuba's most well-known dissidents, at least inside of Cuba suffers, while unfortunately, the rest of the world remains largely silent. It is interesting to me how American news stations go to Cuba and spend a lot of time with members of the regime but do not spend a lot of time focusing on those people inside of Cuba who are trying to create movements for freedom and democracy, as others did in other parts of the world at different times in our history, such as Lech Walesa did in Poland, such as Vaclav Havel did in the former Czechoslovakia, such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn did in Russia, and so many others such as Nelson Mandela did in his own country.

There was international spotlight on these people as they were given a chance by the world's acknowledgment to try to create movements for freedom and democracy in peaceful ways within their own society. Yet in Cuba, somehow, because there are those who have lived with the romanticism of the Castro regime and do not understand it is nothing less than an oppressive dictatorship, they somehow seem to look the other way.

I want to talk just briefly, before I yield the floor to my distinguished colleague from Florida, about one of those dissidents who gives inspiration to these young people who were arrested simply for wearing this plastic white bracelet that says “change.”

Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, in his absence because he is in jail—languishing in Castro's jail—will be receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom next week. Dr. Biscet may not be a household name in America, but he is probably the best known political prisoner inside of Cuba.

Let me read a little about him:

During the Black Spring of 2003, was sentenced to 25 years in prison. The prosecution was the most severe of several that Dr. Biscet had to endure since 1986, when he first publicly declared himself an opponent of the dictatorship.

Barely a month before he was arrested, Dr. Biscet had completed a 3-year prison sentence for, among other “crimes,” displaying the Cuban flag upside down as a form of protest. Before he was imprisoned, Dr. Biscet opposed the regime on several fronts.

In 1986, a year after he graduated from medical school, he protested the long hours Cuban doctors had to work without pay. In 1997, he started the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights and conducted a secret 10-month study of abortion techniques that found, among other things, that many babies were killed after they were born alive.

In February of 1998, Dr. Biscet was kicked out of the Cuban national health care system, making it impossible for him to work as a physician because of the principled positions he took.

During Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba in January of 1998, activists with the Lawton Foundation publicized demonstrated for the release of Cuban political prisoners. They went on a 40-day liquid fast to demand the release of political prisoners and to draw attention to the human rights situation on the island.

But by the end of 1999, the dictatorship had enough of Dr. Biscet. On November 3, 1999, he was arrested and eventually sentenced to 3 years in prison for the so-called crimes of dishonoring national symbols—that is, displaying the Cuban flag upside down—public disorder, and inciting delinquent behavior. He finished his sentence in late 2002. But only 36 days after finishing that sentence, he was rearrested again while preparing to meet with a group of human rights activists.

After several months in jail, he was formally charged with being a threat to state security and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

And he languishes there today. His crime? Seeking peaceful change in his country. His crime? Talking about the death of young born children. His crime? Fighting against a repressive regime. Yet in America, there is silence. There is silence.

It is amazing to me that such a person could write a letter like this even though he has gone through some of the worst things that someone can go through in their life: constant harassment, imprisonment. Earlier this year he wrote an open letter from himself from the Kilo 5.5 Prison in Pinar del Rio, Cuba, that got out. The letter says:

To my fellow Cubans, wherever you find yourselves, whether in our enslaved island, or in exile in any part of the world.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the full letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

AN OPEN LETTER FROM DR. OSCAR ELIAS BISCET FROM THE KILO 5.5 PRISON IN PINAR DEL RIO CUBA.

To my fellow Cubans, wherever you find yourselves, whether in our enslaved island, or in exile in any part of the world. I include also those descendants of Cubans born in other lands. To all of you I send my warmest and sincere greetings.

Our efforts to achieve the unconditional liberty of our nation will soon become reality. I do not need to reveal details to communicate what among Cubans is common knowledge. We suffer not from division or fragmentation in our principles, but rather in which methods to use. We do not lack unity in ideals, but only in the methods to be applied to obtain our liberty. Unfortunately, these insignificant differences of opinion have given room for division among exile leaders and dissidents inside Cuba. These differences have given oxygen to the flames of the most recent and dangerous obstacle that we confront.

I refer to the movement for complacency. A movement that intends to make Cubans—faithful lovers of liberty—believe that they should applaud and be content to receive only small doses of liberty. A movement that suggests that Cubans do not deserve full liberty, but only small dosages of it. This movement of low expectations unites with speculation that other fragments of liberty and democracy will automatically follow. This thoughtless movement does not claim

for Cubans internationally recognized basic human rights, it only suggests them. It does not claim the democratic rights of the violated Constitution of 1940, but opts instead for the framework of the illegitimate Communist constitution of 1976. That constitution is nothing more than an instrument of oppression, a malevolent document whose only purpose is to justify the totalitarian and ill-formulated state. It is an illegal aberration that has permitted and even encouraged the imprisonment, torture and execution of political opponents without even the minimal legal rights or a defense. An atheist abomination that has only served those who enslave our nation.

To those who feel exhausted after more than 40 years of constant oppression and of unfruitful efforts. To those whose frustrations and discontent have caused them to lose their moral compass. To those who have concluded that we must appease the oppressor. To them I ask:

Is it acceptable to the memory of the thousands of young Cubans, our best sons, who were executed by firing squads for the simple crime of defending our right to full liberty, to now accept complacency? Do those tens of thousands of compatriots who spent decades in prison, and who are still in a prison system whose horrors we can only imagine, deserve only partial liberty? Do those countless families who were separated from their loved ones and destroyed in the process, or those who have perished at sea, or who have died in exile dreaming of returning to their country, deserve that we now accept the crumbs that we are being offered? Shall we accept defeat after nearly a half a century of patriotic heroism in search of liberty and democracy, or shall we show the world that the most brutal and longest lasting dictatorship in our time could not extinguish the unbreakable spirit of liberty of the Cubans?

I must tell you that we have reached a crossroad in our history. Nearly a half a century ago we as a nation confronted a similar historical decision. In those days many accepted the fateful words that circulate again today: "anything would be better than what we already have." They were mistaken then and they are mistaken now. Tragically, more than forty years of our national nightmare have elapsed to find ourselves again with the same question, and with the opportunity to correct our mistakes and make ourselves truly the owners of our own destiny.

I call for the unity of all my compatriots. There exists only one path before us. A path that unites us and includes all Cubans inside and outside the island of Cuba. A path that claims the rights of the citizenry in its entirety. A path that demands full democracy and the unconditional freedom of the Cuban people under a multiparty system of government, democratically elected through free general elections. A path where the Rule of Law is established and which guarantees equality under the law, without distinction of races, sex or religious creed. A path that brings about an unconditional and immediate amnesty to all political prisoners.

Fellow Cubans, let us take a step forward and let us do it in a clear and decisive manner. The work awaiting us is difficult but not impossible. Together we can achieve for our country the genuine democracy deserved by Cuba's citizens.

Finally, to the leaders of the democratic states of the world, to the American people, and in particular to the President of the United States, George W. Bush, we ask only one simple commitment: do not support or promote any solution or accord regarding the future of the Cuban nation that you would not consider acceptable for your own country.

May God illuminate us in our path for the liberty of Cuba.

DR. OSCAR ELÍAS BISCET.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I want to read only two paragraphs of it:

To those who feel exhausted after more than 40 years of constant oppression and of unfruitful efforts. To those whose frustrations and discontent have caused them to lose their moral compass. To those who have concluded that we must appease the oppressor. To them I ask:

Is it acceptable to the memory of the thousands of young Cubans, our best sons, who were executed by firing squads for the simple crime of defending our right to full liberty, to now accept complacency? Do those tens of thousands of compatriots who spent decades in prison, and who are still in a prison system whose horrors we can only imagine, deserve only partial liberty? Do those countless families who were separated from their loved ones and destroyed in the process, or those who have perished at sea, or who have died in exile dreaming of returning to their country, deserve that we now accept the crumbs that we are being offered? Shall we accept defeat after nearly a half a century of patriotic heroism in search of liberty and democracy, or shall we show the world that the most brutal—

The most brutal—brand longest lasting dictatorship in our time could not extinguish the unbreakable spirit of [the] liberty of the Cubans?

That is Dr. Biscet from jail. Those young people who marched on the street with a very simple message—with a very simple plastic bracelet: "cambio," "change," they are inspired by the Dr. Biscet of Cuba and others.

Finally, it is amazing to me that when the island of Cuba is engulfed by a tropical storm, instead of making preparations for the people of Cuba to be safe, state security is making arrests of young people who peacefully walk down a street in Havana because of a simple bracelet but also a powerful message of change. It speaks volumes about what that regime is about.

I hope our colleagues use this tragic and other tragic sets of circumstances inside of Cuba to think about what our policy should be to this regime. I am reminded, standing up here with my colleague from Florida, of our successful fight to increase funds to our democracy assistance programs inside Cuba which help people create peaceful change in their own country.

We are at a critical time for democracy in Cuba, and the Cuban people are the fuel. It is the Cuban people who have faced fear and repression for decades. Yet they continue to fight for change. It starts and it will finish with them. This is why my heart and support go out to them, for what they do is more meaningful and powerful than most can imagine. That is why we grieve for those arrested and harassed and incarcerated and languishing in Castro's jails.

We are also encouraged. We know they grow stronger. We come to the floor of the Senate to make sure they understand they are not alone.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.
The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from New Jersey, my distinguished colleague, for his very passionate and correct and appropriate remarks. I think there is no higher moment for this body than when we stand with those who are oppressed, as this country has, and as this Senate has over the history of our Nation. Standing with those who are oppressed is our highest moment and our best calling.

I do find it ironic that something as simple as this simple little white band, with the word "change" on it, could be so threatening to this illegitimate regime as to have to imprison 70 young people. Now, today, we hear that another 40 have been arrested. It is unconscionable. It is unthinkable that a regime would be so weak as to be so threatened by something as simple as these wristbands we are wearing.

But it is also a sign of the continuing spirit of freedom that continues to be alive and well on that imprisoned island. There is no question about that. That is why I think it was so appropriate we came together to increase the funding for the dissident movement inside Cuba—so they can have the simple resources, such as pens and paper, so they can communicate with one another and they can add their message of freedom and their message of hope.

I do not have any question these young people, whether they were arrested for a few days or for a harsher sentence—and we do not know because there is no rule of law; there is no guidepost we can follow—are simply at the mercy of this regime that for now almost half a century has brutalized its people with totalitarian rule.

I am pleased my colleague from Texas is here, Senator CORNYN. I want to give him a moment of time if he cares to comment on this situation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mr. CORNYN. Briefly, Mr. President, I commend my distinguished friends and colleagues from New Jersey and Florida for this statement of solidarity with the Cuban people.

I could not agree more that it is important—certainly now as much as ever—that we stand arm in arm, shoulder to shoulder, opposed to oppressive regimes that really govern by fear.

I have to say, just briefly, to my friend from Florida, Senator MARTINEZ, I know his personal history of being a refugee from Cuba when he was 16 years old, being part of a Pedro Pan effort to bring young Cubans to America so they could have a better life.

He also shared with me recently a movie which, while a work of fiction, I think, gave me a very emotional sense of what people in Cuba, in Havana in particular, must have experienced with the Cuban people being oppressed by Fidel Castro. I have to tell my colleagues, it is a bleak existence that these people, who are seeking nothing more than the most basic of human rights, have under a heartless regime of a dictator such as Fidel Castro.

So I just wanted to express a few words of thanks and words of solidarity for my colleagues from New Jersey and Florida and to reiterate that all of us, all of the American people stand in solidarity with those in Cuba who seek change, who seek what we perhaps too often take for granted; that is, our freedom to speak, to live, to worship as we see fit. We ought to do everything we possibly can to support them.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I wish to join my colleagues, our two distinguished Members of the Senate who are of Cuban origin and who proudly bear that moniker of "Cuban American," one of the most distinguished groups in our society in America today.

I wish to say that at the time Fidel Castro was beginning his takeover on the island of Cuba, as a young boy I had the opportunity of representing the youth of America and going to the Iron Curtain at the German-Czechoslovakian border and speaking over Radio Free Europe to the young people behind the Iron Curtain. Of course, at age 17, what I saw that day made a lasting impression, for standing there at the German-Czechoslovakian border in the little village of Tillyschantz, seeing the machine gun nests, the guard towers, the concrete dragon's teeth to prevent anyone from breaking through the fence, the mine fields, the ground raked very clean so that any footprints could be seen, seeing the dogs patrolling back and forth, that, of course, made a significant impression upon a young mind that had some appreciation for the enslavement of people.

Now, what happened to the Iron Curtain is happening to Cuba. That iron curtain around Cuba is starting to fall, and it is for exactly these same things that are happening now: 70 young people walking around with white wristbands that say "cambio"—change—that the dying Communist, repressive, totalitarian regime is continuing to lash out and arrest them. It is the inevitable march of history that ultimately freedom is going to win, just as it did in Eastern Europe with the fall of the Iron Curtain that I saw at age 17. It has taken a lot longer in Cuba because of its island barrier, because of its extraordinary repressive regime.

So whenever we get a chance to speak out for change—"cambio"—we in this Senate need to do it. I am delighted to join my colleagues, Senator MARTINEZ and Senator MENENDEZ, in unifying our voices in calling for cambio in Cuba.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Florida for coming to the floor. Senator MENENDEZ was so eloquent in his description of the situation today, and I wish to echo his comments regarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom Oscar Elias

Biscet will be receiving on Monday. It is a wonderful acknowledgment of this Afro-Cuban doctor. He, in his quest for freedom, has chosen to follow Martin Luther King, Jr., the Dalai Lama, and Gandhi. This is a man of peace. He is not a man of armed conflict, not a man of violence; he is a man of peace. He is in prison, as was mentioned by the Senator from New Jersey, but I want us to understand that being in prison in Cuba isn't as simple as just being denied the opportunity to walk and move as you will but it is to be in the most repressive gulag the world has ever seen.

President Bush last week was speaking eloquently about the situation in Cuba. He said: The day this regime ends, those who have supported it will be embarrassed by the things that will be revealed, just like those who supported the Eastern European gulag or the Nazis or the Stalins of the past, who were embarrassed at a time when the full measure of their cruelty was seen and recognized.

As we approach the agricultural fair in Havana, I remember that as a young boy—my father was a veterinarian, and one of the biggest thrills for me was to go from my small city to Havana to the fair. This was a time when the cattle exposition was there, and my father, of course, being involved in this industry, was there doing business. I remember seeing my first rodeo there. It is a wonderful memory.

Well, this fair still goes on every year. I know there will be many from this country who believe the most appropriate thing to do is to make a buck and go there and sell goods and participate in this fair. I hope when they are there, they might have the courage themselves to wear one of these little wristbands. I will be happy to supply them. I have a few. It would be wonderful if they would show up at the fair wearing these wristbands that say "cambio"—just a simple message of solidarity with those who are oppressed.

We are a people of freedom. We enjoy our liberty, and we want it for others. We understand that the time for the Cuban people is coming. The hour for the Cuban people is approaching. It is coming. So I thank my colleagues for their solidarity, Senator CORNYN from Texas as well as my colleague from Florida and Senator MENENDEZ, all joining today in one voice seeking "cambio"—change—and standing together with these young people for their courage and their bravery, as well as celebrating this wonderful award Dr. Biscet will be receiving on Monday, which is a good recognition of his long work in the area of human rights, and hoping that it might be an opportunity for the Cuban regime to perhaps consider whether it is the time to grant him his freedom.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. McCaskill). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for about 7 or 8 minutes.

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

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, Members of the House and Senate have worked diligently over the last several months to write a bill to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program. They worked hard and came to a solid bipartisan compromise. This is a bill that Republicans and Democrats alike have championed. Almost 70 Members of the Senate voted for the Children's Health Insurance Program, and about 290 members of the House voted for it.

Despite the strong support nationwide from both parties in the House and both parties in the Senate and the strong support from groups such as the United Way to children's hospitals, to pediatricians, to medical groups, to all kinds of children's advocates, the President still vetoed it.

Now we have an opportunity to save the bill. For our national leaders who are still unsure, I wish they would meet the families benefiting from this program. I would love it if President Bush would meet families such as the Coltmans of Conneaut, OH, which is not far from where my wife grew up, near the Pennsylvania border. The Coltmans are a large family with five children and two hard-working parents.

In July, their 7-year-old son Caleb was diagnosed with leukemia. The doctors are optimistic, but treatment, of course, is very expensive. Last year, Kenna Coltman, Caleb's mother, left her job to work for her family business, a neighborhood grocery store. Unfortunately, this meant she had to search for new health insurance. After a long search for private insurance, the Coltman family found an affordable plan, but it wasn't scheduled to go into effect until August.

By that time, Caleb had been diagnosed with leukemia. Needless to say, that was a deal breaker for the private insurer.

Uninsured, facing catastrophic illness—a parent's worse nightmare—the Coltmans ran out of options. Caleb's mother recounted the experience this way:

If there was absolutely any other way to get our son the care and medication he needs without totally impoverishing our family, we would do it.

Instead, the Coltmans turned to Ohio's Healthy Start/Healthy Families program, a Medicaid-CHIP joint initiative.

Mrs. Coltman said:

We were lucky in the fact that last year was a really bad year for us financially, or we may not have even qualified for Medicaid.

Hear that again:

We were lucky in the fact that last year was a really bad year for us financially, or we may not have even qualified for Medicaid.

It seems wrong to me that a family should be feeling "lucky" because they earned so little money in 1 year that they were able to qualify for Medicaid to take care of their son who was diagnosed with leukemia.

But Mrs. Coltman does feel lucky and they qualified—falling below 200 percent of poverty even after exhausting all their savings.

Caleb's treatment is now covered. Thankfully, his current prognosis is good, and the family business seems to be turning the corner. Although the Coltman parents are still without health insurance, the children remain covered through SCHIP—a bona fide lifesaver, a real lifesaver.

Let's make sure other families—in Ohio and elsewhere—have access to this critical health insurance safety net by sending the Children's Health Insurance Program bill to the President's desk.

Let's provide children in Ohio, in Missouri, and elsewhere, such as Caleb, the start in life that will help them to achieve their goals and develop to their fullest potential.

Ten years ago, a Democratic President and Republican Congress made a promise to low-income children and their parents. We told them they would be able to insure their children. We wrote it into law and the Children's Health Insurance Program has worked for 6 million children. Now, this bill will help us follow through on that promise for 4 million additional children.

There are millions of low-income American children who are eligible but not now enrolled. This bill enables our country to follow through for more children who are already standing at the door. This bill lets them in. We have an insurance program that works, a bipartisan consensus that is firm, and a goal that is above politics. Our goal is to provide health insurance for our children. Let us move forward.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have had a number of conversations this morning with Democratic and Republican Senators. They are attempting to work out a compromise with respect to the CHIP bill, the children's health program. They think if they have more time, they can do that. I believe they are acting in all sincerity. They have tried very hard. They have even had individual meetings with House Members; Democratic Senators have met

with Republican House Members; Democratic and Republican Senators have met with Republican House Members. They have tried to work something out.

It is an unusual situation. They have even been calling the Speaker. A number of the prime negotiators have talked to her numerous times on the telephone and met with her personally.

Having said that, this is an effort to try to work something out. I ask unanimous consent the motion to proceed to H.R. 3963 be agreed to, that the bill be laid aside until 4 p.m. this coming Monday, November 5; that on that day, Monday, November 5, the Senate vote on cloture on the bill at 5 p.m.; if cloture is invoked, there be 2 hours for debate on the bill and any possible germane amendments thereto, and at the conclusion or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote under the provisions of rule XXII.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on behalf of one of the Members on my side of the aisle, I would have to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Madam President, in an effort to try to be cooperative in this matter, I ask consent to allow these individuals more time to deal with this, and therefore I ask unanimous consent to proceed to this legislation, H.R. 3963, and that it be adopted and the bill be laid aside until the disposition of the farm bill, H.R. 2419. That would probably not be until, at the earliest, somewhere in the middle of November sometime.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, once again there is an objection on this side of the aisle.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Madam President, of course, I am disappointed. I have tried to keep the Republican leader advised. I have done my best to balance the requests. I usually do not get in this position of Democratic and Republican Senators, but I have been happy to do that. This is my effort to try to do that.

I hope there can be some way, sometime, that we can send a bill to the President that he will not veto. Hopefully, this one he will not. We have made some changes in it, as I have indicated. We changed to no waivers over 300 percent. We have locked in more tightly anything dealing with undocumented children. We have cut the time for adults. Any adults who are on the program, with no children, they were to have 2 years, now it is 1 year. We have moved the best we can.

Having done that, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate now proceed to consideration of the children's health insurance bill, H.R. 3963, the time between now and 4:45 p.m. today be equally divided between

the two leaders or their designees, and no amendments or motions be in order to the bill; that at 4:45 p.m. the Senate vote on cloture to the bill and that motion to be filed upon reporting of the bill; if cloture is invoked, the bill be read a third time and the Senate vote without any intervening action or debate on passage of the bill.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, reserving the right to object, and I will not object, let me echo the observations of the majority leader about how important the children's health insurance issue is.

This was a measure that originated with a Republican Congress back in the 1990s. I think we are going to be able to get this worked out after this skirmish that has been going on over the last few weeks in a way that will guarantee additional poor children receive the health insurance they certainly richly deserve.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the unanimous consent request? The chair hears none, and it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I thank the Chair.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2007

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3963) to amend title XXI of the Social Security Act to extend and improve the Children's Health Insurance Program, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the cloture motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Calendar No. 450, H.R. 3963, the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007.

Max Baucus, Harry Reid, Benjamin L. Cardin, S. Whitehouse, Robert Menendez, Daniel K. Inouye, Jack Reed, Barbara Boxer, Pat Leahy, Bernard Sanders, Ken Salazar, Kent Conrad, Ron Wyden, Byron L. Dorgan, Debbie Stabenow, Bill Nelson, Robert P. Casey, Jr.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, earlier today I joined with several of my colleagues—the good Senator McCASKILL and Senator CASEY and a distinguished leader on children's health, Dr. Woodie Kessel—to speak out on the children's health legislation we are considering in the Senate.

Dr. Kessel is an extraordinary public health official, a pediatrician who has been widely acclaimed and recognized

by virtually all the medical societies for his lifetime commitment to children. He worked in Republican and Democratic administrations and feels passionately about the importance of the passage of this CHIP legislation.

Dr. Kessel spoke of a recent presentation of the American Academy of Pediatrics on the value of investing in children's health provided by Dr. James Heckman, the Nobel laureate in Economics. I wish to share his words with the Senate today, as they make a persuasive case for the bill that is before us. This is a direct quote from the Nobel laureate.

It is a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and in society at large. Investing in disadvantaged young children is such a policy. Early interventions for disadvantaged children promotes schooling, raises the quality of the workforce, enhance the productivity of schools and reduce crime, teenage pregnancy and welfare dependency. A large body of research shows that skill begets skill; that learning begets learning. The earlier the seed is planted and watered, the faster and larger it grows.

That is what our bill is all about. Investing in America's future, investing in our children. If we give them the chance for a healthy start to life, we will reap the rewards for decades to come in terms of better education and a more productive workforce. If, instead, we succumb to the politics of fear and division coming from the White House, we consign 10 million American children to a dimmer future.

The CHIP program is an education issue because we know children who are sick—unable to see the blackboard, unable to hear the teacher, unable to read the book or understand the homework—are not going to learn. So this is a health issue and it is a children's issue. It is a children's issue because it affects the 10 million children.

It is a working families issue because this is targeted to the children of working families, more than 92 percent for those families earning under 200 percent of poverty, about \$42,000 for a family of four. So it is a working families issue.

It is a fairness issue. Particularly in the Senate, when we cast our votes this afternoon—we are getting paid \$160,000. Our health insurance for all the Members of the Senate—with the exception of one individual—for all the Members, is paid for by the American taxpayers, 72 percent: 72 percent of our health insurance; every Member. We have the best. I have believed that since I have been involved in the health issue since arriving in the Senate, and I was reassured of that in the last couple weeks when I needed medical attention. We have the very best. We can go down to the dispensary in the Capitol of the United States and see some of the finest medical personnel in our country. We can go to Walter Reed, we can go to Bethesda Naval Hospital, places where the President and the Vice President and Cabinet and other Members of Con-

gress have gone, and we get our health care paid for, effectively, in full.

Yet we are going to vote to deny the working families of this country, people who are making 200 percent of poverty—\$40,000, these are working families in this country—the opportunity to have their children covered?

That is the issue, that is the fairness issue, that is the values issue, and that is the issue before the Senate this afternoon.

We know when these children get the healthy start, as the Nobel laureate pointed out, they are more productive, they are more effective. They are going to be more effective and more productive and healthier for their lives. They are going to be more lively, in terms of the world economy and the knowledge-based competition we are going to be facing in a world economy. They are going to be more effective as leaders, in terms of our national security. They are going to be more gifted and talented, in terms of implementing rights and liberties and having our democratic institutions function and work the way our Founding Fathers wanted them to work.

This is an enormously important bill that reaches the heart and soul of what this country is all about. I am hopeful we will have a strong, overwhelming vote in favor of moving ahead and achieving our objective.

NOMINATION OF MICHAEL B. MUKASEY

Madam President, I intend to oppose the nomination of Michael B. Mukasey to be the next Attorney General of the United States.

This is a nomination I had hoped to support. There is no doubt the Department of Justice is in desperate need of new leadership. Under Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, the Department was transformed from a genuine force for justice into a rubber stamp for others in the administration who cared little for the rule of law.

The Office of Legal Counsel, and the Attorney General himself, repeatedly authorized programs of torturing detainees and wiretapping Americans that were both illegal and immoral.

Career attorneys who spoke up were marginalized or transferred to dead-end jobs. U.S. attorneys were fired if they refused to take orders from the White House as to who should be prosecuted.

The Civil Rights Division turned its back on its historic mission, and failed to vigorously enforce our civil rights laws. Instead of protecting the rights of all Americans, it spent time approving voter-identification laws that keep the poor, the elderly, and minorities away from the polls, and investigating phantom allegations of "voter fraud."

There has never been a time when the Department of Justice was more in need of a new direction, away from partisanship and back to its critical responsibility of protecting our rights and enforcing our laws.

We all hoped that Michael Mukasey could provide that needed leadership.