

and small business employees with affordable private health insurance options. In addition, my plan would have included a new program called FairCare to reduce racial disparities, increased the number of school-based health centers around the Nation, reinvested in our public health infrastructure, and provided new funds and incentives for the improvement and adoption of health information technology. Lastly, my health care proposal included a new strategic investment in promising breakthroughs in biomedical research to bring new treatments, diagnostics, and cures to the public. I will continue to support these incremental reforms as we move forward.

But as our health care system shows increasing signs of strain and growing numbers of Americans join the ranks of the uninsured, I also believe that we must seriously consider comprehensive, systemic reform to achieve the goal of quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

For that reason, I am proud to support the Healthy Americans Act, a strong proposal that provides this Congress with a bipartisan starting point on health care reform.

The Healthy Americans Act has the potential to offer universal coverage while using a fiscally responsible approach, which I believe are the keys to moving forward in a bipartisan manner. The legislation would reform the tax code in a well-thought out manner to make comprehensive health care reform a true possibility. By realigning key provisions in the Tax Code, this legislation would achieve universal coverage without adding yet another burden to the Federal budget. The legislation would also shield American business from ever-rising health care costs and, by unleashing market forces, protect the economy by reining in overall health care costs—all while reassuring our families that their health care will always be there.

An independent health care consulting group found that through new revenues, savings, and the restructuring of tax credits, the Healthy Americans Act would not result in new Federal spending. The group also projects that the proposal would reduce the annual health spending growth rate by 0.86 percent totaling a savings of \$1.48 trillion from 2007–2016, or 4.5 percent of total spending over that time period. Lastly, the group estimates that the proposal would cover 99 percent of all Americans.

The act would establish a centrally financed system of private health insurance for all Americans. Comprehensive coverage policies would be available through new insurance pools, which would harness the power of a reformed health insurance marketplace that would provide individuals with choice and value. The plan would be paid for by eliminating the current employer health benefits tax exclusion, which is estimated to cost the Federal

Government approximately \$200 billion per year. Instead, subsidies would be provided to lower income and working families to purchase comprehensive coverage. Employers, in turn, would convert the health benefits they currently provide to employees into higher wages that employees would use to buy health insurance. Lastly, individuals would also receive a new health insurance premium tax deduction to prevent tax increases in middle-income workers resulting from the higher wages.

This proposal embodies both the foundation and architecture for building a health care system that will achieve universal coverage. Each of the stakeholders in our health care system—from individual Americans, employers, to insurance companies, health care providers and hospitals—will gain something under this plan. I believe this legislation offers crucial benefits for all stakeholders while calling on them to make equitable, economically efficient contributions to the shared effort of achieving health security for all Americans.

As we move through what I hope will be a successful legislative process, I will be working with my colleagues to ensure that we perfect the balance this bill strives to reach. That effort will be crucial for my home State of Connecticut. First, nearly 60 percent of Americans currently receive coverage through their employers, and in Connecticut, more than 60 percent of our workers are covered through employers. We must move cautiously and ensure we protect coverage for those currently a part of the system that has served us for decades, and provide American businesses with the support necessary to make short-term changes in benefits, in exchange for long-term cost savings and increased competitiveness. At the same time, moving away from a primarily employer-based system of coverage would provide individuals with true portability and stability of coverage, while, again, protecting competitiveness of American businesses against runaway health care coverage costs, in this new global economy.

Second, the legislation as currently drafted would mandate that employers provide employees higher benefits equivalent to the amount that employers currently contribute for employee health care benefits. We should consider the prudence of safeguards following a mandate period in order to prevent employees from facing wage cuts that would reduce their capacity to purchase comprehensive coverage.

Third, a new health premium tax exemption will be created by this legislation so that most workers are not paying higher taxes with the increase in wages, which are to be used for the purchase of health insurance. But in many States, such as mine, the cost of living and cost of health insurance are higher than in other parts of the nation, placing unique pressures on residents of

those States. Therefore, I plan to work with Senator WYDEN and the other sponsors of the act to move in a direction that will take account of differences in health insurance coverage costs, as well as in cost of living.

Lastly, the proposal would transition Medicaid and CHIP beneficiaries into the new program. Given the complex health needs of many Medicaid beneficiaries, we must ensure that they have the necessary levels of coverage under any new system. I look forward to working with my colleagues on each of these issues.

I applaud the efforts of my colleagues, Senators WYDEN and BENNETT, and of the bipartisan group that is supporting this legislation, and I am proud to join them. If we put aside partisan politics and muster political will, we can provide the American people with true leadership on this most important domestic policy issue, and can succeed in bringing quality health care to all Americans.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, in honor of the eighth annual International Education Week, which runs Monday, November 12 to 16, 2007, I would like to emphasize the importance of international education and exchange programs and the key role they play in strengthening our own educational system, shaping our young citizens to become successful in our interconnected world, and improving our image as Americans overseas.

In so doing, I want to share a number of stories from my constituents about how their international education and exchange experiences have changed their lives. While I do not have time to read all of their stories, I will ask to have them printed in the RECORD as each and every one of these stories demonstrates how critical it is that we support international education and exchange programs and initiatives.

You will see in all of my constituents' stories a common theme—international education has opened their eyes to the fact that we are an interconnected global community and that we have responsibilities as Americans to reach out to that global community. A constituent, Claire from River Falls, WI, wrote to me that:

I was an AFS student in high school (in Brazil) and since then firmly believe that if we could lift every 16 year old out of their "comfort zone" and have them live somewhere else in the world for a few months; we'd end war and certainly increase global understanding.

I agree with this statement and firmly believe that if we all stepped out of our "comfort zone," we would be facing a future that is more stable and secure than where we appear to be today.

International education and exchange strengthens our own educational system in a variety of ways. First and foremost, educational exchanges better prepare our children for

the workforce and competing in the global economy. Katherine from River Falls shared her experience working through a nongovernmental organization called Building Tomorrow. She wrote:

While in Uganda [with Building for Tomorrow], I was fortunate enough to have a homestay experience with a Ugandan family . . . I and two other Building Tomorrow members were paired with a doctor because we all had an interest in some aspect of health care . . . This experience was remarkable and contributed to my decision to pursue a career in public health.

International education and exchange strengthens our own educational system. Teachers and students participating in exchange programs are able not only to broaden their own horizons, they also inform their peers of their experiences and thinking and, in so doing, contribute to their school systems for the lasting benefit of others. Sandra, a teacher in Sun Prairie, wrote to me that she participated in two separate Fulbright Hayes Group Projects Abroad and that, "both Fulbright-Hayes Group Projects Abroad inspired me to develop innovative interdisciplinary curriculum units, made infinitely richer by my newly acquired photographs, video footage, cultural artifacts, interview notes, books published outside of the U.S., and personal reflections . . . As a result of ongoing internationally focused literacy programming, my middle school students, including reluctant and struggling readers, seek out books on other cultures and countries, are intrigued by world maps, and pay more attention to world news and global concerns."

International education and exchange programs foster greater cultural understanding. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders—and the better they understand other cultures, the better prepared they will be to make informed and balanced decisions for the benefit of our Nation's and our world's security and well-being. Thanks to the disastrous policies of this administration, anti-American sentiment around the world is at alarming levels. Those policies were based, in part, on inadequate information or misinformation about the rest of the world. As a result, future American leaders are facing a world that is fraught with mistrust. Their overseas experiences today will build relationships for tomorrow. Those experiences will form their future decisions and provide them with a broader appreciation of others' views and interests.

Sarah, a senior at University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, wrote to explain to me about her semester abroad program:

Traveling and studying abroad in general taught me about American and other cultures, societies, views, and ideas, different forms of government, a greater sense of independence, and how to look at cultures and traditions that are different from my own with an open mind, rather than making judgment[s] before I know all the facts.

As U.S. citizens, many of us have privileges that countless millions of

people throughout the world will never experience. International educational opportunities encourage a greater sense of social responsibility to assist those who face lives of poverty, disease, and the effects of natural disasters. Lacey, a 25 year-old graduate of UW Madison, e-mailed me upon her return from spending a summer studying in China which impacted her so much that she is returning to be a volunteer interpreter at the Beijing 2008 Olympics. She wrote:

I use my travels and the things I learn from each place to bring back to my community with me and try to give back in whatever way I can as much as possible.

Finally, our citizens are our best diplomats. International education and exchange programs offer them the opportunity to reach out to others to reverse negative or inaccurate images that the rest of the world has formed. Kathy from Oshkosh shared with me how her experiences changed her perceptions:

I recall with distinct clarity a conversation I had with my host mother in Spain about the people of Islam in our country. She was very surprised that I had friends who are Muslim and that I respect their culture and religion. She told me that I changed the way she views Americans . . . Senator Feingold, I am no longer just a citizen of the United States of America. I am a citizen of the World.

Congress has an important role to play in enabling and promoting these experiences for our constituents. I was a strong supporter of the creation of the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, an independent commission created in 2004 for the purpose of recommending a program to greatly expand the opportunity for students at institutions of higher education in the United States to study abroad, with special emphasis on studying in developing countries. One of my colleagues—Senator DURBIN—has taken an important step in working to implement the commission's published recommendations by introducing the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act of 2007, S. 991. But this bill is not enough. We also need to be supporting opportunities for every American to study overseas. And if not study, then to volunteer or participate in one-on-one exchanges. Cultural misunderstanding makes our world more dangerous, and, as you have heard from the accounts I have read, it is our citizens who make the biggest, longest lasting change.

As we recognize and celebrate International Education Week, I call on all Americans to take a little time to learn something new this week about another culture, and I encourage all Americans to recognize and support international education and exchange throughout the year.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have constituent stories printed in the RECORD.

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

ADDITIONAL STORIES

In the summer of 2005 our family, which owns a dairy farm, did an international exchange with a Mexican college student named Ceci.

Boy oh boy did it open our eyes to the cultural differences as well as similarities that we share. Our children later did a reciprocal exchange, and stayed with Ceci's family for 3 weeks, and again this summer we had an opportunity to go visit Ceci's family who live in Queretaro, Mexico. I have also volunteered to speak about this cultural eye opening experience to our local elementary school, and have shared our pictures of the farms we visited while in Queretaro. Very similar...

Our countries have so much to offer each other, it sickens me that our government is spending so much money in the name of terrorism to build a wall between our borders. I respect the need to secure our borders, but there should be a diplomatic way in which we could legally allow those seeking work to come here and work. Those who come are following a dream of a job, not a dream to kill Americans. If we were working them to place them in jobs, it would be easier to outline our expectations and track them as well.

ELLEN, *Independence*.

Studying abroad is an opportunity that any student should be able to take advantage of. This past Spring Semester, I had the chance to study abroad in Pamplona, Spain. Never did I imagine it possible for me to study in Spain had it not been for the financial help provided for me in the form of grants and loans. I entered Spain, expecting to learn a language, when I left I had learned and gained so much more. Coming back to the United States, I not only feel more comfortable in my ability to speak Spanish but in the way I present myself. When studying abroad, language can become a barrier, and one must rely on other things such as tone of voice, hand gestures, and more often relationships to understand the culture to its fullest. Having to conquer the hurdle of language while I was abroad, I learned to depend on other strengths and attributes I never knew I had. I can say honestly, that I have gained much more than the experience of learning a language, moreover the growth of a family. Living in the United States, I take a little piece of Spain with me wherever I go, hoping to influence others with my experience.

MARY, *Oshkosh*.

This past summer I completed an internship on the Tibetan Plateau in the Yunnan Province of southwestern China. It was coordinated through UW—River Falls and the China Exploration and Research Society (CERS). The mission of CERS is to conserve the cultural and natural environments of remote China. I aided in this mission by helping to develop eco-tourism plans for one of their current projects. This involved designing nature trails, septic systems, and composting toilets.

Living in a developing country really puts the world into perspective. I now look at my day-to-day life differently than before. It is hard to put into words, but I feel much more content with my decisions and myself. Seeing the lives of the rural Chinese and Tibetan people has shown me how other people live and sustain themselves on very limited resources. They get things done with the tools around them and are patient to let things unfold naturally. When time is taken to look at all the options for solving a problem and all the consequences have been laid out, the likelihood of success based on common sense is far greater.

Studying abroad is a great opportunity and a true life-altering event. It challenges a person right down to their core and really builds character on a newly formed understanding of the world.

NICK, *River Falls.*

I had a once-in-a-life-time opportunity to study abroad in the Wisconsin in Scotland program in the spring of 2006. This experience changed my life. It not only helped me realize what I wanted to do in my life, and gave me the desire to travel, it also changed the way I looked at every aspect of the world. This biggest thing I took away from the program is my view of other cultures. I was naive when I first left to study abroad thinking that any culture that wasn't as "advanced" or "sophisticated" as the U.S. was simply just not wealthy enough to be up to our "standards." I now am adamant that this is not the case. I live by the phrase "different isn't bad, scary, or wrong, it is just different." This experience also helped me realize what I wanted to do with my life. I intend to become a theatre professor, and I want to teach somewhere in the UK. I loved every single aspect of my study abroad experience and cannot wait to go back. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I learned something about myself that I would not have learned anywhere else besides in another study abroad experience. I learned my own personal strength. I learned what I was capable of. When I was on holiday in Milan I missed my flight, and it was up to me, not my professor, or my parents, to figure out what to do. I never realized what it was like to be a real adult until I had to take care of myself. It was scary, and it was hard, but I did it. I now have this inner strength of knowing what I accomplished by myself, in a land where no one spoke my native language, and I got myself through it. I will be forever grateful to the University of Wisconsin—Superior and their Wisconsin in Scotland study abroad program for turning me into the strong, well-educated, and open-minded woman that I am today.

NICOLE, *Superior.*

I was fortunate enough to study in another country. At first, when my friends told me about the study abroad program, I was hesitant to sign up for the experience. In the end I had made a decision that would change my life forever. I had decided to study in the Wisconsin in Scotland program. Before that time I had never even been in an airport much less fly to another country. When I was in Scotland, I learned far more about culture than any one could experience from a class or text book. I was place in a foreign world and had to deal with the changes. This is what made me feel more confident about my independence as a person. Soon after my return, my communication and people skills flew through the roof. Thanks to the study abroad program for helping me become the successful person I am today.

Aaron, *Menomonie.*

I am currently a student at the University of Wisconsin—River Falls. Last semester, spring 2007, I was a participant in the "Wisconsin in Scotland Program." It was an amazing experience to be a part of. Not only were we able to enroll in courses which would transfer credit back to our home university, but we could fully absorb a different culture by living in it. One of my friends said it best—you learn more from traveling, especially studying abroad, than you could from years in a classroom with text books. Although Scotland is relatively similar to Wisconsin, volunteering in the community of Dalkeith, visiting with host families, and traveling with new friends offers new chal-

lenges. When we flew back in May, I think we all had a new sense of independence, a different look on the influence of the United States on other countries, and an appreciation for what we have at home. Being able to have the opportunity to study abroad is an important, valuable experience.

GENA, *River Falls.*

I am a senior at the University of Wisconsin—River Falls. Two years ago, I spent a semester of my academic career studying Spanish in Queretaro, Mexico. I lived with a host family while I attended the Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, and I had an absolutely phenomenal experience. Yes, I developed my language skills significantly, but even more so, I developed an appreciation for the Mexican culture and an understanding of the social and educational problems that cause so many of the Mexican people to emigrate to the United States. My study abroad experience impacted me so greatly that I changed my major from Elementary Education to Spanish Education with a minor in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) so that I might work with the growing immigrant population.

THERESA, *River Falls.*

From September 2005 until September 2006 I was on a sabbatical leave from UW—Whitewater in Oman as a senior Fulbright program scholar. I taught business and economics courses at Modern College of Business and Science, which is located in Muscat. In addition, I assisted the College administration and owners in preparing their college for academic accreditation. I participated in English language training of Omani judges (in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy and the Ministry of Justice). My family and I have met many interesting people from different ways of life and had many opportunities to travel throughout the region.

Promoting American values in the Middle East today is very difficult. I believe that my solid work particularly with college students will enhance good will and will bring tangible benefits in the future by developing bilateral business and educational linkages.

TOM, *Whitewater.*

UWM's Fulbright-Hayes summer program offered an opportunity to nurture an interest I've had in the Middle East and North Africa since I was a freshman in college (over a decade now). Like many Americans, I had reservations about traveling to a part of the world that seems hostile to us. My experience with my Moroccan host family proved this perception false. I learned that the legendary warmth and hospitality of the Arab world are not myths. Indeed, my host family gave the impression that their primary enjoyment of material comforts came from sharing them with me, a stranger with strange ways to whom they had opened their home. They eagerly shared their culture with me, and were infinitely patient as I learned the finer points of Moroccan manners, such as eating with my right hand and remembering to take my shoes off when I walked on a carpet.

After my experiences in Morocco, I find myself having a lot to say when I hear another American declare that Arabs or, more broadly, people in the Muslim world, hate us. Hearing this is frustrating, knowing what I know now, especially when people use it to justify an unjust action on the part of the United States toward countries in the Muslim world. The Moroccans I met went out of their way to distinguish between the U.S. government and the American people when expressing dislike of a particular U.S. government policy or action against a country

in their region. They feel that their side of the story is not heard or understood. Since I've been back, I find myself seeking out news coverage of the Middle East and North Africa, waiting to hear those perspectives my Moroccan friends and family shared with me. Their absence only seems to reinforce the "well, they hate us," attitude, since they are often preempted by more extreme viewpoints.

I think that programs like our summer trip to Morocco can expose both sides to new ways of seeing the conflicts that exist between us and that can be a positive first step to better relations.

VALERIE, *Ripon.*

I was selected to participate in the Training of Writers program offered by the National Council on Economic Education (NCEE). This program is part of the Cooperative Education Exchange Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, and carried out in coordination with the U.S. Department of State.

Briefly, the week I spent in Bucharest was amazing and exceeded all of my expectations! On a professional level, I benefited from the formal goal of the program: creating a pool of qualified economic curriculum writers which provided insights into NCEE curriculum materials, voluntary national content standards in economics, and active learning strategies. This program has already improved my teaching as I re-focus my lessons on meaningful and relevant economics content. (Hence, the reason why I am swamped as I am making adjustments and improvements in my classroom.) On a personal level, the experience of working with international educators was invaluable. We worked as partners in collegial teams creating active, meaningful economic lessons which could be implemented in K-12 classrooms worldwide. The collaboration allowed me to learn about economic education in various countries and build an international network of fellow educators. I will continue to work on this program over the coming months as I refine my lesson with feedback from the U.S. faculty, field-test the lesson in classrooms here in Wisconsin, and finally submit my final lesson to NCEE with revisions based on feedback from teachers involved in the field-testing.

My international experiences through opportunities provided by the NCEE have shown me the importance of working in partnership with people in other countries and building positive collaborative relationships.

ANN, *New Richmond.*

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

100TH BIRTHDAY OF GRACE DODD

• Mr. DODD. Mr. President, November 9, 2007, was a very special day for me and my whole family. On that day, my mother, Grace Dodd, would have turned 100 years old. She has been gone for many, many years now; but not a day goes by without her memory. I would like to take this chance to call back those memories and speak about what made her so special.

I have never known a more infectious optimist. More than anything, that is what comes back: her unshakeable confidence that no matter how bad the problem, she could fix it; her lifelong dedication to the bright side; a smile that could turn even the grumpiest person pleasant.