

deal with Colombia that shortchanges workers, that rewards polluters, that gives businesses the same power as sovereign governments. Later, I will talk more about a part of this trade agreement and how it does reward polluters and gives businesses the same power as sovereign governments. In many cases, corporations will be able to override the democratically attained rule of law, rules, and regulations. More on that later.

Back to the issue at hand with Colombia, we absolutely should not sign a trade deal that forgives treachery toward labor leaders, that says it is OK that these labor leaders are murdered. We in this body will fight alongside our Colombian labor friends for fair trade, and we will fight for their efforts to end the violence.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Montana.

FARM BILL

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise today not only as a U.S. Senator from Montana but also as a farmer who is actively engaged in agriculture, family farm agriculture. It truly is a family farm that we operate in north central Montana. Not only do my wife Sharla and I farm, but when we need help, my brother, my son-in-law, my son, and my daughter all step to the plate and help us.

We just finished spring planting in north central Montana, and with it comes hopes for a great year. We all know the commodity prices right now are very good, but the rest of the story is this: Diesel prices are double what they were last year. Chemical prices have gone through the roof. Fertilizer is becoming unaffordable because the cost is so high.

That is where the farm bill steps in—this farm bill which just came out of conference committee which we will vote on, hopefully, later today. In this farm bill, we raise the target price. We have a disaster program that Senator BAUCUS fought so hard to get into this bill so that farmers, when they do have a disaster, do not have to come back to Washington, DC, with hat in hand. They will have a safety net. We have country-of-origin labeling in this farm bill with some teeth in it that I hope the next administration takes by the horns and adopts so people know where their food comes from. It allows for the interstate shipment of meat so small meatpackers can ship their products across State lines, which has not been available before, to add value to meat products throughout this country. It has a nonfood biofuel section of which a part of that is a camelina pilot program, which I am very proud of, which offers farmers another crop for their rotation and helps this country become more energy independent. It also has a very aggressive nutrition program to help people who need help buying food, which is very important.

This bill is about rural development, about making rural America all it can be, creating jobs, and helping meet this country's energy needs, creating a level of energy independence.

This bill is also about food security for this country. We have been very fortunate in the United States. We have not suffered the lack of food that other countries have. I believe it is because of farm bills of the past, and it is because family farmers have done such a great job meeting this country's food demands.

We need to have a farm bill that helps support those family farmers, and that is exactly what this farm bill does. Is it perfect? No. But is it pretty darn good? Yes. This farm bill does things for people in production agriculture that it needs to do to make sure they remain in business, to make sure this country's food security needs are met.

So when I read editorials in newspapers on the east coast, west coast, in the Washington Post, Boston Herald, Dallas Morning News, Los Angeles Times—and the list goes on and on—that talk about this farm bill being loaded with waste and giveaways and lard, I ask the folks who write these editorials to come out to Montana and talk to somebody who has their hands in the dirt. Go out to the Midwest and see the kinds of challenges these folks have and ask yourself: Is this farm bill really full of the kind of waste you are talking about? Because it is not. It is a farm bill that meets the needs of America's family farmers. As I have said many times before, if we lose this country's family farmers, this country will change forever, and not for the better.

So I applaud the folks who worked on the conference committee from both parties, from all corners of this country, to develop a farm bill that meets the needs of this country. I hope the Members of this Senate join me later on today in voting for this farm bill and sending it to the President's desk. I hope the President signs it because it is the right thing to do.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll of the Senate.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it has now been 10 days since the devastating tropical cyclone hit the country of Burma. The cyclone, which brought sustained winds of 130 miles an hour, with gusts as high as 160 miles an hour, really caused widespread destruction across this Asian nation.

As you can see from the before and after satellite photographs that are on this chart, the devastation was particularly severe in the country's low-lying delta area. A 12-foot wall of water swept away entire villages, leaving thousands dead and homeless. Bodies floated in floodwaters, and survivors tried to reach dry ground on boats, using blankets as sails. Fights broke out around the few shops that were able to provide any kind of food to the hungry people.

The United Nations has estimated that between 1.2 million and 1.9 million people have been severely affected and that cyclone-related deaths could reach over 100,000. Already, more than 200,000 people are reported missing.

Immediately after the cyclone, countries around the world, including the United States, offered emergency supplies and assistance. We offered help in transporting badly needed food, water, and medicine. In fact, U.S. Navy ships that by coincidence were in the region for training exercises have remained in the vicinity to offer help. Yet almost 2 weeks after the cyclone, this natural disaster has been made worse by the reluctance of the Burmese military government to even accept international aid on the scale that is necessary. Instead, they have ignored the plight of their own people, as the entire world watches. Not only have they refused most outside assistance, they broadcast shameless propaganda showing the military handing out aid to the people. Yet reports from the ground indicate the government has done little or nothing to really help. In fact, there are reports that the government's military has confiscated some of the limited aid that has been allowed to enter into the country.

Not only has the military ignored the suffering of its own people, but it tried to push through a sham referendum at the same time. Can you imagine a national election in the midst of this devastation? Critical time and resources were used to intimidate people to the polls—time and resources that should have been spent for helpless and suffering victims.

U.N. Secretary Ban Ki-moon summed up the situation when he said:

This is not about politics; it is about saving people's lives. There is absolutely no more time to lose.

He continued:

Unless more aid gets into the country very quickly, we face an outbreak of infectious diseases that could dwarf today's crisis.

In a country that already has one of the worst health care systems of the world, it is even harder for people who need medical attention to find it. The environment is a rich breeding ground for infection and contagious disease. We are hearing disturbing reports of badly injured people trying to dress their own wounds. The government has repeatedly forced humanitarian organizations such as Doctors Without Borders to leave the hardest hit areas. Bodies are decomposing. The contamination is spreading. The immediate

risk of waterborne disease is acute. The risk of other diseases, such as malaria and dengue fever, is growing as mosquitoes rapidly reproduce in the flooded areas.

Existing malnutrition among children, which affects up to half the population in Burma, is even worse because of the flooding and cyclone.

Mr. President, perhaps the world should not be so surprised with this military's outrageous reaction to this disaster. This is, after all, a government with a long, well-documented history of brutality to its own people.

In eastern Burma, the military has destroyed 3,000 villages over the past 10 years. It has widely used forced labor and has recruited up to 70,000 child soldiers—far more than any other country in the world. Today, Burma has an estimated 1.5 million internal and external refugees.

It is a country with a well-documented history of political repression and torture. Two years after the Burmese people protested conditions in 1988, the government held an election. Aung San Suu Kyi, a leader in human rights around the world, was placed under house arrest before the election and has suffered mightily since. Despite her party's victory she was subjugated and imprisoned in her own home for most of the last 18 years. Suu Kyi has been awarded the Congressional Gold Medal—recognition by this Congress of her singular efforts in Burma to bring a new day and a new government. Last September, thousands of monks peacefully protested for change in Burma. Many of them were hunted down, imprisoned, and killed. This military junta has ignored global calls for dialog and an end to the violence.

Earlier this week, ADM Timothy Keating, who leads the U.S. Pacific Command, and USAID Administrator Henrietta Fore landed with an American relief flight in Rangoon. They met directly with the Burmese military officials to offer help. I hope this visit does help.

Last week, I spoke of the world taking definitive action to halt the genocide in Darfur. Today, we face a mounting humanitarian crisis in Burma.

Some, including French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, have said the United Nations should invoke the responsibility to protect—a provision that allows the world community to help those left unprotected by their governments. Others argue that China, which also has suffered a horrible natural disaster this week, should use its friendship with Burma to help open the country to outside assistance. At a minimum, Burma should view China's response to its earthquake, in which it immediately and proactively stated its willingness to accept emergency aid, as an important way to work with the global community. Whatever the route, the world community, with American leadership and generosity, must do more to address this humanitarian crisis.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, free market fundamentalism tells us that all we have to do is get Government out of the way and the miraculous powers of competition and supply and demand will solve all our problems. This is a cardinal principle of the administration now in power. They have had 7½ years to test their theory, and the results—for our economy and America's working families—has been a disaster. They have put their theory to work, and it has thrown Americans out of work. The middle class in America is shrinking and suffering. Today, more Americans are falling out of the middle class than are working their way into it.

A new poll by the respected Kaiser Family Foundation provides a sobering look at the economic situation and the reality of economics in America today. The Kaiser Foundation asked people about seven economic trends or changes that they considered serious problems. Forty-four percent of Americans said problems paying for gasoline is a serious problem for their family's financial well-being. Twenty-nine percent said problems getting a good-paying job or a raise are serious. Twenty-eight percent of Americans said problems in paying for health care and health insurance were serious and hurting their economic well-being. Those are the top three economic strains on family budgets: The price of gasoline, jobs—good-paying jobs—and paying for health care.

They also rated serious problems when they were asked about the strains and problems their families face. Problems paying for mortgage or rent: One out of five. Problems paying for food and credit card debt: One out of five. Losing money in the stock market: About one out of six.

We have heard a lot said about the strain the record gas prices are placing on families and our economy. Yet in the midst of all this, with the knowledge of what it is doing to our economy, to families, to businesses, to farmers, big oil companies continue to rake in record profits at the expense of the American economy.

I wish to take a few minutes to talk about another economic problem that is hurting America's families and businesses: out-of-control health care costs. A recent essay in Newsweek magazine contained an eye-opening title: "The Myth of the Best in the World."

I ask unanimous consent that the full article be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

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

[From Newsweek, Mar. 22, 2008]

THE MYTH OF 'BEST IN THE WORLD'—A SPATE OF NEW RESEARCH SHOWS THE U.S. BEHIND OTHER COUNTRIES IN CANCER SURVIVAL AND DIABETES CARE

(By Sharon Begley)

Not to be heartless or anything, but let's leave aside the dead babies. In international

comparisons of health care, the infant mortality rate is a crucial indicator of a nation's standing, and the United States' position at No. 28, with seven per 1,000 live births worse than Portugal, Greece, the Czech Republic, Northern Ireland and 23 other nations not exactly known for cutting-edge medical science—is a tragedy and an embarrassment. Much of the blame for this abysmal showing, however, goes to socioeconomic factors: poor, uninsured women failing to get prenatal care or engaging in behaviors (smoking, using illegal drugs, becoming pregnant as a teen) that put fetuses' and babies' lives at risk. You can look at 28th place and say, yes, it's terrible, but it doesn't apply to my part of the health-care system—the one for the non-poor insured.

That, in a nutshell, is why support for health-care reform is fragile and shallow. Yes, many people of goodwill support extending coverage to the 47 million Americans who, according to the Census Bureau, had no insurance for all or part of 2006. An awful lot of the insured, though, worry that messing with the system to bring about universal coverage, even if it allows more newborns to survive, might also hurt the quality and availability of care that they themselves get ("If I have trouble getting my doctor to see me now, what will happen when 47 million more people want appointments?"). This is where you start getting the requisite genuflection to the United States' having "the best health care in the world." One problem: a spate of new research shows the United States well behind other developed countries on measures from cancer survival to diabetes care that cannot entirely be blamed on the rich-poor or insured-uninsured gulf. None of this implies a specific fix for the U.S. health-care system. It does, however, say that "the best in the world" is a myth that should not be an impediment to reform.

How widespread is the "best in the world" view? In a survey of 1,026 U.S. adults, the Harvard School of Public Health and Harris Interactive reported last week, 55 percent said they thought the United States has the best quality care of any country. (Fewer called the U.S. system the best overall, due to poor access and high costs.) "Health-care reform has failed before and will fail again if middle-income people with insurance think it will make quality go down," says Harvard's Robert Blendon.

One thing Americans love about their system is the availability (for the insured) of high-tech equipment and the latest procedures. But there is abundant evidence that these are not necessarily beneficial. I remember breast-cancer patients screaming bloody murder in the 1990s when they were denied access to bone-marrow transplants. Sadly, once the treatment was subjected to rigorous study, it was shown not to extend life. But it made women who worked the system to get it (some private insurers agreed to cover it) suffer even more than they already were. In a centralized system such as Medicare, science more than the market shapes what treatments are available. "Some of the things patients scream for," says Blendon, "aren't going to help them." Though they do run up the U.S. medical bill. At \$6,697 per capita in 2007, it is the highest in the world (20 percent more than Luxembourg's, the next highest) and more than twice the average of the 30 wealthy countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

If only it bought better care. Only 55 percent of U.S. patients get treatments that scientific studies show to work, such as beta blockers for heart disease, found a 2003 study in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. One reason is that when insurance is tied to employment, you may have to switch doctors when you change jobs. In the past three