

record, as misinformation, half-truths, and distractions fill the airwaves.

Let's be honest. These facts don't matter much to those who are dead set on opposing health insurance reform for partisan reasons. They don't matter to the Republican Senator who said he hopes the effort to fix our broken health care system will be President Obama's "Waterloo." They don't matter to the Republican Senator who said Republicans will oppose the bill regardless of any concessions Democrats make. They don't matter to the Republican Senator who said, "I don't have to read it, or know what's in it. I am going to oppose it anyways." Their strategy is to deny the undeniable fact that families' personal health and pocketbooks are suffering. Their strategy is to defend the indefensible practices of insurance companies that make huge profits on the backs of our seniors and our sick. Their strategy is to ignore polls that clearly and consistently show the American people support a public option and instead argue, without evidence, that they don't.

Republicans make no effort to hide their shortsighted and self-destructive strategy. In fact, Roll Call newspaper today reports that they "have mapped out a strategy to draw out debate" rather than work with us to strengthen the bill. Politico reported last week that Republican consultant Frank Luntz is out with a new memo urging Republicans to fake bipartisanship. You will recall that, back in May, Luntz encouraged Republicans to oppose a health care reform bill before there was a single hearing held to determine what should be in the bill and long before a single bill was even written. Now Luntz says Republicans have more to gain by faking bipartisanship and from complaining about the health care bill than working to improve it. All of us—every single American—stand to lose if that happens. I know Senate Republicans appreciate transparency because their strategy is as transparent as it comes. That strategy is simply to delay, delay, delay. And now the newspaper Roll Call acknowledges that.

At the same time, I couldn't help but notice that while Senate Republicans demand transparency, their own plan is being drafted, obviously, in secret—if, in fact, there is one. We don't know how much their bill will cost—the Republican bill—if there is one. We don't know whom it will help, if anybody, or how it will keep insurance companies from abusing Americans. They won't tell us how their plan will lower your health care bills so you don't have to choose between medication and your mortgage. So I can only conclude one of two things: Either the Senate Republicans are drafting a bill in secret or their proposal simply doesn't exist and the Republicans have no solutions to one of the greatest and most urgent challenges of our time—health insurance reform. Whichever it is should concern the American people greatly.

I will acknowledge there is one thing that won't be in their bill secretly or in a transparent fashion, and that is to repeal the McCarran-Ferguson Act that exempts insurance companies from antitrust laws. The insurance companies love that because they can take advantage of the American people, as they have since 1945, since that act became law.

It is increasingly clear to the American people who is trying to help them. It is clear who is reaching across the aisle and negotiating in good faith and compromising where necessary.

Mr. President, we want to work with the Republicans, but how can you work with a party that says that they hope President Obama fails and that this is his Waterloo? It doesn't matter what is in the bill, they will oppose it. Again, today, we heard from Roll Call that their only strategy is to delay. I hope that will change and they will work with us to come up with some ideas on how they can improve health insurance. Let's get the bill on the floor and start debating it.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today, following the remarks of the two leaders, there will be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each. At 4 p.m., the Senate will resume consideration of the Unemployment Benefits Extension Act, with the time until 5 p.m. equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees. At 5 p.m., the Senate will proceed to a cloture vote on the Reid-Baucus substitute amendment.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel will address a joint meeting of Congress tomorrow at 10:30 a.m. Senators should begin to gather in the Chamber at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning so they can leave at 10:10 a.m. to proceed to the House of Representatives.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE WEEK XVI DAY I

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for months, the American people have been sending us a clear message about what they want to see in health care reform. They want practical, common-sense reforms that drive down the cost of care, improve access, and create more choices. What they are getting instead from Congress are higher premiums, higher taxes, Medicare cuts, and more government control over their health care decisions.

They are getting the same old big-government solutions to problems that call for creative, modern-day solutions.

Quite simply, there seems to be a disconnect between the American people

and Democrat leaders in Congress. And nowhere is that disconnect more apparent than in the 2,000-page bureaucratic monstrosity of a bill that House Democrats dropped on the American people last week.

At its core, this bill is very similar to what we have already seen in the Senate—a trillion-dollar government experiment that raises taxes, raises premiums, slashes Medicare, and leads to unprecedented government control over the health care decisions of Americans. That is the foundation, the starting-off point. It doesn't get any better from there.

Let's start with the pricetag. At a time of unprecedented government spending and a staggering \$12 trillion debt, the Democrat health care bill asks taxpayers to pony up at least another trillion dollars. To get some sense of the size of that figure, consider the fact that this bill would cost more than \$2 million per word. And believe it or not, that is a conservative estimate.

Once fully implemented, the bill will spend \$2.3 trillion. And this doesn't even account for the \$250 billion that is needed to prevent a cut in reimbursements to doctors who treat Medicare patients. While this so-called "Doc Fix" is no longer in the bill, we saw last month how Democrats in both the House and Senate plan to pay for it. They want to put this \$250 billion on the government credit card and then claim their plans don't add to the deficit.

Well, Americans aren't buying it.

The bill would also hit already-struggling States by imposing a crippling, 10-year, \$34 billion expansion of Medicaid. And it fails to meet the key test that Americans had set for reform, which was to control costs. Indeed, contrary to early promises by the administration about the need to control costs, this bill would actually increase long-term Federal health care spending.

The health care choices that Americans currently enjoy would also be limited under this bill, and the government's role would increase dramatically. If you don't want to buy insurance, too bad: under this bill, the government forces you either to buy insurance or pay a new 2.5-percent tax. Under this bill, the government would also tell you what kind of insurance you can have by dictating the benefits you receive. If a politician in Washington doesn't approve of your current health care plan, you may be forced to give it up. Ironically, the person who would dictate your benefits would go by the title of the Health Choices Commissioner only in Washington, Mr. President.

Notably, this bill no longer includes language from earlier draft legislation stating that essential benefits coverage should not lead to the rationing of health care. Language preventing rationing is out. We can only conclude from the exclusion of this language that the bill writers have opened the

door to rationing care at some point down the road—just like every other country that has gone in the direction of government-run health care for all.

Business owners are also a special target of this bill. The government will tell all but the smallest employers they must cover employees even if they cannot afford it. If they refuse, they get hit with a \$135 billion tax—a tax that independent experts warn will lower wages and kill jobs.

Unemployment is nearly 10 percent, despite the administration's prediction that it would not rise past 8 percent if we passed the stimulus. But instead of trying to create jobs, Democrats are trying to push through a trillion-dollar experiment with massive new taxes that would kill even more jobs right in the middle of a recession.

Finally, under this bill, the government would create a government-run health care plan that Americans oppose. Democrats say the whole point of a government plan is to give Americans a lower cost option. But the CBO has said that the premiums for the House government plan would actually be higher than the premiums for private plans. So in order for the government plan to meet its goal of offering a lower cost alternative, it would have to use the power of government to subsidize costs, ration care, and undercut private insurers. Democrats may call this an option, but it is clear to everyone else that this type of government-run plan would eventually become the only option.

Americans want real reforms that lower costs and increase access—reforms such as getting rid of junk lawsuits, leveling the playing field on health care taxes, and incentivizing healthy choices. Yet instead of adopting these commonsense ideas, the authors of this bill seem intent on forcing the American people to accept more spending, more debt, more taxes, and more government in their daily lives.

You can call that a lot of things. You can call it a lot of things, but you cannot call it reform. The passage of time has not been good to Democratic efforts at health care reform. Earlier versions were deeply flawed to begin with. But when Americans look closely at this latest version, they will wonder who exactly congressional leaders have been listening to over the past several months. Clearly, it is not the American people.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business until 4 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Illinois.

HEALTH CARE AND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we just heard the Republican leader of the Senate speak, as he does every day, against health care reform. He has opposed it from the start. He is consistent. His message is consistent. He does not propose any alternative. There is no Republican health care reform bill anyone has seen or heard of. He comes in each day and tells us what is wrong with the efforts underway in Congress, both the House and the Senate, to change the health care system of America.

Unfortunately, most Americans—certainly most business people—understand that the current health care system in America is unsustainable. The cost of health care is going up so fast that fewer and fewer businesses are protecting their employees and fewer and fewer individuals can afford to buy health insurance. And those who buy health insurance know the reality of what it means today. They know that when they need it the most, many health care insurance companies turn them down. People who had paid for a lifetime into a health insurance plan they had never used finally faced an accident or a diagnosis or a critical illness, went to their doctor, headed to the hospital, only to find that now they were not just going to have to battle an illness, they had to battle their insurance company.

I cannot tell you how many cases have come to my office—so many that we have lost count—asking: As a Senator, will you please intervene with my health insurance company.

The most recent involved a young man who has been battling cancer in my State for years, a heroic battle that I know something about because I know his family. He finally found a drug that worked that his oncologist recommended. It was a new drug, but it was one that worked. For a while, the health insurance company paid for it. Then they announced they were going to cut off payments because it was not an appropriate drug. Do you know how much it will cost his family to provide that lifesaving drug to him each month? It is, \$13,000. How long can he last? How long can the savings last? How long can we stand here and tolerate that kind of mistreatment of the American people?

Yet day after day, the Republican leader comes and tells us he is opposed to change; he does not support our efforts to bring about real significant change when it comes to health insurance in this country.

Let me tell you what our bill does—this bill he said we should not pass. It eliminates preexisting conditions. Do you know what that means? When you need your insurance the most and your health insurance company goes back and pulls out your health insurance ap-

plication and says: You forgot to tell us you had headaches as a teenager or acne and, therefore, we are going to walk away, disallow any medical care. Does that sound outlandish? It is a fact in both instances and in cases that have come to our office—preexisting conditions. Preexisting conditions, a battle that people have to fight all the time with these health insurance companies, would be prohibited under health insurance reform that we are working on.

Or how about their decision to cap the amount of coverage they will provide. You don't know when you get into cancer treatment or serious brain surgery what the ultimate bill is going to be. But the health insurance companies can walk away from you when you are sick and need their help the most.

We know what they do with kids, young people, when they reach the age of 23. It happened in my family. They cut off your children. No more will they cover them. They have to find their own coverage. This bill says we will extend that coverage.

We are basically trying to plug the gaps in health insurance coverage today that haunt American families when they desperately need help. And the Republican minority leader comes to the floor and objects to that, objects to this health care reform. I don't understand where he is coming from.

He says this bill is too long. I have heard the Senator from Kentucky and other Senators say: Why, this bill is 1,000 pages long—1,000 pages. I don't know if there is an appropriate number of pages for health care reform. I don't know if 100 is the right number and 1,100 is too much. I don't know if we should be involved in that kind of silly argument.

What we are talking about here is a piece of legislation that will impact health care for every American and will literally address one-sixth of the American economy. Mr. President, \$1 out of every \$6 spent in America is spent on health care. We are working now to bring down costs and create a system that is fair, stable, and secure for people across the United States. If it takes 2,000 pages, does that mean the bill is wrong?

The other day on the floor, I asked one of the Republican Senators who was talking about the bill being too long, first I said: Have you seen it? Of course he had not because the bill is currently being written. The final bill is not before us. It will be on the Internet for at least 3 days before it is considered on the floor, as it should be, but there is no final bill.

Then I asked him how many pages is the Republican alternative on health care reform. He stumbled a little bit because there is no Republican alternative to health care reform. Speeches, yes, but nothing in writing.

When we went through the HELP Committee and marked up the bill—one of the bills that is part of the package being considered—there were 150