We are being presented with a false choice that should be rejected outright. The majority and the administration are saying: Don't make us do this. My answer to this is, simply: You don't have to.

Before concluding, I want to spend a few minutes putting to rest some of the criticism that will surely follow my decision to offer a disapproval resolution. During the debate over my last amendment, several baseless arguments were made. So I would like like to challenge anyone who finds reason to oppose my resolution to keep their remarks, and thereby this debate, as substantive as possible.

First, I want to reiterate my desire to take meaningful action to reduce our Nation's greenhouse gas emissions. Such a policy can and should be drafted by Congress, and designed to both protect the environment and strengthen our economy. I was a cosponsor of a climate bill last Congress, and I am continuing to work on legislation that will lead to lower emissions. Senator BINGAMAN and I spent more than 6 months developing a comprehensive energy bill in committee, and have now held six hearings on our climate policy options.

Next, my resolution is not meant to run contrary to the Supreme Court's decision in Massachusetts v. EPA. Remember, I previously sought a 1-year delay of this process that would have allowed mobile source emissions to be regulated. That amendment was blocked by the majority from even being considered and, at this point, I am left with little choice but to raise the question of whether the Clean Air Act is capable of effectively regulating greenhouse gas emissions.

Finally, I am not interested in trying to embarrass the President, either here at home or on the international stage. I have stated publicly that I wish the President well in making progress on international issues. And I think it is safe to acknowledge that I didn't choose to release the endangerment finding on the opening day of the Copenhagen climate conference; that was the EPA's decision. As Administrator Jackson reportedly said, the EPA ''tried to make sure we had something to talk about'' in Copenhagen.

Mr. President, I understand I may have come to the end of my 20 minutes. I ask unanimous consent for a minute and a half to conclude my remarks.

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Chair.

If the administration truly wanted something to highlight in Copenhagen, it should have prioritized climate legislation over health care. The Senate majority could have devoted weeks spent on a tourism bill and other matters to working through a climate bill here on the floor. And even if climate legislation could not be agreed to, Congress has now had nearly 6 months to take up the comprehensive bill we reported from the Energy Committee. That bill would have allowed the President to highlight significant accomplishments on energy efficiency, clean energy financing, and renewable energy generation. Instead, he is left to tout regulations that his administration doesn't really want, that a wide range of stakeholders dread, and that many Members in both Chambers of Congress actively oppose.

We need to only look back to the development of the Clean Air Act itself for an example of how this process can, and should, work. The product of both Presidential leadership and congressional unity, the 1970 Clean Air Act was unanimously passed by the Senate. I hope the current administration will take note of that example. And should we ever reach a point where the President is able to sign climate legislation into law, I truly hope it will be the result of his administration having brought Congress together to complete this important task.

Right now, though, the administration and the majority in Congress continue to choose a different path. Threatening to disrupt the Nation's economy until Congress passes a bad bill by the slimmest of margins won't be much of an accomplishment, nor is that approach worthy of the institutions and people we serve. It isn't appropriate for a challenge of this magnitude. No policy that results from it will achieve our common goals or stand the test of time.

As I said earlier, I am submitting this resolution because it will help prevent our worst option for reducing emissions from moving forward. The threat of EPA regulations are not encouraging Congress to work faster, they are now driving us further off course and increasing the division over how to proceed.

I understand that some are comfortable with the threat of EPA regulations hanging over our heads. But, in closing, I would simply remind my colleagues of an observation once made by President Eisenhower:

> Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.

What we are dealing with right now isn't leadership—is an attempt at leverage. The EPA's endangerment finding may be intended to help protect our environment, but the regulations that inevitably follow will only endanger our economy. That lack of balance is unacceptable. We can cut emissions, but we can't cut jobs. We can move to cleaner energy, but we can't force our businesses to move overseas. It is past time to remove the EPA's thinly veiled and ill-advised threat, and we can do that by passing my resolution and giving ourselves time to develop a real solution.

With that, I yield the floor, and I thank my colleague from Connecticut for his courtesy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. SHAHEEN). The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. DODD. Madam President, I wish to resume the conversation about the pending health care proposal.

We have had a lot of talk, going back for 60 years, I guess, about health care. But in the last year, if we tried to calculate the number of times there have been meetings and conversations, not including the ones that occur here on the floor of the Senate but throughout the Capitol, both in the other body as well as here, between Members and staffs, it has been voluminous, to put it mildly. We are coming down to what appears to be the remaining few hours before we will decide as a nation whether to move forward or to leave things as they are with the hope that one way or the other things may correct themselves in terms of the cost, affordability, and quality of health care. So the next few days of debates could largely determine whether, once again, the Congress of the United States, Democrats and Republicans, as well as the administration and all of the others who have grappled with this issue now for many months, will succumb to what has afflicted every other Congress and every other administration and every other group of people since the 1940s. That is our inability to answer the question of whether we can do what almost every other competitor nation of ours around the world did decades ago—provide decent, affordable health care for our fellow citizens.

If nothing else, this debate has proven how complex this issue is and it has demonstrated the wide variety of viewpoints that exist among those not only in this very Chamber but among people across the country. Certainly, that was evident during this summer's townhall meetings. I held four of them in my State earlier this year. I know most of my colleagues either did telemeetings or conducted them in their respective States. Because this issue affects one-sixth of our economy and 100 percent of our constituents, not only those here today but obviously the millions yet to come, our debates have been spirited and our disagreements at times emotionally charged, not only here in this Chamber but across the country.

So to my Democratic colleagues who still have concerns over aspects of the legislation, as all of us do; to any of my Republican colleagues who still desire to put people, as I know they do, ahead of partisanship; and to my fellow Americans who worry that politics will once again triumph over progress, which it has for six decades, let me offer some context for the debate that begins again this afternoon and will arrive at a closure in a matter of hours and days. The answer ultimately will be whether we move forward and do what I think the majority of our fellow citizens want us to do or fall back, once again, into the same paralysis that affected Congresses, administrations, and generations before us.

The consensus we have already reached as a Senate is that health care

reform would represent a significant victory for the American people—I think we all agree on that point—and it would be a significant moment in our Nation's history.

I think all of us can agree that insurance companies should not be allowed to deny coverage because of a preexisting condition, that these same companies shouldn't be able to ration the benefits a family receives, and that citizens of the United States should be guaranteed that the coverage they pay for will be there for them when they need it. I think all of us in this Chamber, regardless of party or ideology, agree that reform should make insurance more affordable; that it should protect Medicare and keep it solvent so that it will be there for future generations; and that it should improve the quality of health care for all Americans, focusing on preventing diseases, reducing medical errors, and eliminating waste from our system so that our health care dollars are used more effectively. I think all of us can agree as well, regardless of which side of this debate one is on, that reform should empower families to make good decisions about purchasing insurance; empower small businesses to create jobs; empower doctors to care for their patients instead of filling out paperwork; and empower the sick to focus on fighting their illnesses instead of fighting their insurance companies. These are the commonsense reforms that will make insurance a buyer's market, keep Americans healthier, and save families and the government an awful lot of money in the years ahead. I think all of us share these views—at least that is what I have heard in the last year I have been so intensely involved in this debate and formulating the policy that is now before us.

If we listen to the distinguished minority leader, our good friend from Kentucky, we might be surprised to learn that his conference has decided to not just oppose our legislation but, unfortunately, to obstruct even further progress. After all, he called for a reform bill that incentivizes workplace wellness, allows people to purchase insurance across State lines, and reduces costs. Our bill does all three things. Let me be specific. On page 80, our bill includes a bipartisan proposal allowing employers to offer larger incentives for workplace wellness programs. On page 219 of our bill, it includes a Republican proposal allowing health plans to be sold across State lines. On page 1 of the Congressional Budget Office analysis of this bill, the Congressional Budget Office concludes that our bill would cut the deficit of our Nation by $130 billion over the next 10 years—the single largest budget deficit reduction since 1997.

In a body of 100, as we are, in which both parties claim to agree on these principles, we should be able to achieve, one would think, a bipartisan consensus on a matter of this magnitude. But, sadly, it would seem our colleagues—many of them, again, on the other side of this divide—don't seem to care what is in this bill specifically.

I am reminded again, as others have been, of what is actually included in this bill—not that I would expect them or anyone on this side of the divide to agree with everything that is here. We don't. There is not a single Member of this body who would not write this bill differently if he or she could. There is no doubt in my mind whatsoever about that. But we serve in a collegial body of 100 where we have to come to consensus with each other even when we don't agree with every single aspect of this bill.

Yet, when I read the words of the chairman of the Republican National Committee—and again speaking on behalf of a party, this is why I find this so disheartening. At a time such as this, I expect there to be full debate and disagreement over various ideas. But read, if you will, the words of the national chairman of a major political party in this country. Here is what he is suggesting his party ought to be doing at this critical hour:

> I urge everyone to spend every bit of capital and energy you have to stop this health care reform. The Democrats have accused us of trying to delay, stall, slow down, and stop this bill. They are right.

Let's hear that again:

> The Democrats have accused us of trying to delay, stall, slow down, and stop this bill. They are right.

It is awfully difficult to hear my colleagues talk about wanting to get a bill done, wanting to come together, when the chairman of their national party is recommending they do everything in their power to stop a bill that, in fact, includes many of the very reforms they themselves embrace.

Make no mistake, if the status quo prevails, one thing I can say with absolute certainty—if we do what too many of our friends on the other side and clearly what the chairman of the Republican National Committee are recommending—I can predict with absolute certainty the outcome, and that is that premiums will go up dramatically, health costs will continue to wreak havoc on small businesses, our deficit will grow exponentially, and Americans will see premiums nearly double in the next 4 years. In my state of Connecticut, a family of four is paying $12,000 a year right now. It is predicted that those premiums will jump to $24,000 within 7 years if we do nothing. That much I can guarantee.

For those who argue for the so-called status quo or keeping things where they are, know that more and more people will lose their health insurance. More families will be forced into bankruptcy. Hundreds of thousands of Americans are going to die unnecessarily, in my view, in the name of that obstruction. I don't think we can let that happen. So it has fallen to the majority to do alone the job we are all sent here to do collectively—the hard and honest work of legislating, as difficult as it is.

The factors that make this work so hard are not new or unique to this debate, and, as history shows, they will not be what is remembered a generation from now. The words that have been spoken here in this Chamber, the charts, the graphs—all of these things are slowly forgotten by history.

Today, we hold Medicare up as an example of a program worth defending. How many speeches have been given in the last 2 or 3 weeks about the glories of Medicare? I only wish those Members who are here today had been present in 1965. We might have been able to pass that bill without the partisan debate that took place in those days.

Today, no one talks about the 50 years it took to bring Medicare to the floor of the Senate. No one talks about what the polls said in 1965 when it took a lengthy debate involving more than 500 amendments, by the way, to achieve consensus on Medicare. I might add, nobody attacks it as socialized medicine as they did in 1965.

It is always easier to envision the legislation we want than it is to pass legislation we need. Such is the case here this afternoon. We won't end up with a bill that I would have written if it were up to me, and it won't be the bill that any one of our colleagues would have written either.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. DODD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent for 2 more minutes.

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

Mr. DODD. But it will be a bill that improves the health care of all Americans. It will be a bill that makes insurance more affordable, improves the quality of care, and helps create jobs in our Nation. It will be a bill that saves money and saves lives. And it will be a bill that decades from now we will remember not for the differences we had in this Chamber but for the differences it made in our Nation and for the differences it made for our fellow citizens.

To get there, we must build on the consensus we have already reached, not tear it down with the petty weapons of political gamesmanship. We must answer not the call of today's poll or tomorrow's election but the call of history that we have been asked to meet, that other generations, other Congresses have failed to meet but we are on the brink of achieving.

My hope is that all of us will come together in these closing hours and do that which many predicted we could not do: pass legislation that we need.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I wish to start by referring briefly to the remarks made earlier by the Senator from Alaska. She indicated earlier on the floor that she is going to be offering a motion of disapproval for a set of