

“(i) at least 3 times during the first year after the date of enactment of this subsection; and

“(ii) annually thereafter for the 4 succeeding years.

“(4) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated for each of fiscal years 2010 through 2014, \$20,000,000 for the purpose of carrying out this subsection.”

SEC. 4. GAO REPORT ON COLLECTION AND REPORTING OF DATA ON DEATHS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Within 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study to determine, and submit to the Congress a written report on the adequacy of, the methods of collecting and reporting data on deaths of children in the child welfare system.

(b) MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED.—In the study, the Comptroller General shall, for each year for which data are available, determine—

(1) the number of children eligible for services or benefits under part B or E of title IV of the Social Security Act who States reported as having died due to abuse or neglect;

(2) the number of children so eligible who died due to abuse or neglect but were not accounted for in State reports; and

(3) the number of children in State child welfare systems who died due to abuse or neglect and whose deaths are not included in the data described in paragraph (1) or (2).

(c) RECOMMENDATIONS.—In the report, the Comptroller General shall include recommendations on how surveys of children by the Federal Government and by State governments can be improved to better capture all data on the death of children in the child welfare system, so that the Congress can work with the States to develop better policies to improve the well-being of children and reduce child deaths.

By Mr. REID (for Mr. KENNEDY (for himself, Mr. DODD, Mr. HARKIN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CASEY, Mr. INOUE, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. KERRY, Mr. AKAKA, Mrs. BOXER!, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. BURR, and Mrs. GILLIBRAND)):

S. 1152. A bill to allow Americans to earn paid sick time so that they can address their own health needs and the health needs and the health needs of their families; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, in this turbulent economy, working families are facing enormous challenges. Too many families are living paycheck to paycheck, just one layoff or health crisis away from disaster. Now more than ever, workers are struggling to balance the demands of their jobs and their families. When a sickness or health problem arises, these challenges can easily become insurmountable.

Unfortunately, almost half of all private sector workers—including 79 percent of low-wage workers—have no paid sick days they can use to care for themselves or a sick family member. For these workers, taking a day off to

care for their own health or a sick child means losing a much-needed paycheck, or even putting their jobs in danger. In a recent survey, 1 in 6 workers reported that they or a family member have been fired, punished or threatened with termination for taking time off because of their own illness or to care for a sick relative.

Workers can't afford to take that kind of risk now. Losing even one paycheck can mean falling behind on bills, foregoing needed medicines, or skipping meals. As a result, many employees continue to go to work when they are ill, and send their children to school or day care sick, because it's the only way to make ends meet.

The lack of paid sick day is not just a crisis for individual families—it is a public health crisis as well. The current flu outbreak provides a compelling illustration. To prevent the spread of the virus, the World Health Organization, the Center for Disease Control, and numerous state and local public health officials urged people to stay home from work or school if they flu-like symptoms. Strong scientific evidence proves that this is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of disease and protect the public health.

But without paid sick days, following this sound advice is often impossible—millions of employees want to do the right thing and stay home, but our current laws just do not protect them. The Family and Medical Leave Act enables workers to take time off for serious health conditions, but only about half of today's workers are covered by the act, and millions more can not take advantage of it because this leave is unpaid.

Hardworking Americans should not have to make these impossible choices. That's why Senator DODD, Representative ROSA DELAURO and I are introducing the Healthy Families Act, which will enable workers to take up to 56 hours, or about 7 days, of paid sick leave each year. Employees can use this time to stay home and get well when they are ill, to care for a sick family member, to obtain preventive or diagnostic treatment, or to seek help if they are victims of domestic violence.

This important legislation will provide needed security for working families struggling to balance the jobs they need and the families they love. It will improve public health and reduce health costs by preventing the spread of disease and giving employees the access they need to obtain preventive care. It will also help victims of domestic violence to protect their families and their futures.

In addition, the legislation will benefit businesses by decreasing employee turnover, and improving productivity. “Presenteeism”—sick workers coming to work and infecting their colleagues instead of staying at home—costs our economy \$180 billion annually in lost productivity. For employers, the cost averages \$255 per employee per year, and exceeds the cost of absenteeism

and medical and disability benefits. The lack of paid sick days also leads to higher employee turnover, especially for low-wage workers. When the benefits of the Healthy Families Act are weighed against its costs, providing paid sick days will actually save American businesses up to \$9 billion a year by eliminating these productivity losses and reducing turnover.

Above all, enabling workers to earn paid sick time to care for themselves and their families is a matter of fundamental fairness. Every worker has had to miss days of work because of illness. Every child gets sick and needs a parent at home to take care of them. And all hardworking Americans deserve the chance to take care of their families without putting their jobs or their health on the line.

It is long past time for our laws to deal with these difficult choices that working men and women face every day. As President Obama has said, “Nobody in America should have to choose between keeping their jobs and caring for a sick child.” I urge all of my colleagues to join in supporting the Healthy Families Act.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 155—EX-PRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA SHOULD IMMEDIATELY CEASE ENGAGING IN ACTS OF CULTURAL, LINGUISTIC, AND RELIGIOUS SUPPRESSION DIRECTED AGAINST THE UYGHUR PEOPLE

Mr. BROWN (for himself and Mr. INHOFE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 155

Whereas protecting the human rights of minority groups is consistent with the actions of a responsible member of the international community;

Whereas recent actions taken against the Uyghur minority by authorities in the People's Republic of China and, specifically, by local officials in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, have included major violations of human rights and acts of cultural suppression;

Whereas the authorities of the People's Republic of China have manipulated the strategic objectives of the international war on terrorism to increase their cultural and religious oppression of the Muslim population residing in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region;

Whereas an official campaign to encourage the migration of Han Chinese people into the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region has resulted in the Uyghur population becoming a minority in the Uyghur traditional homeland and has placed immense pressure on people and organizations that are seeking to preserve the linguistic, cultural, and religious traditions of the Uyghur people;

Whereas, pursuant to a new policy of the Government of the People's Republic of China, young Uyghur women are recruited and forcibly relocated to work in factories in

urban areas in far-off eastern provinces, resulting in tens of thousands of Uyghur women being separated from their families and placed into substandard working conditions thousands of miles from their homes;

Whereas the legal system of the People's Republic of China is used as a tool of repression, including to arbitrarily detain and torture Uyghurs who have only voiced discontent with the Government of the People's Republic of China;

Whereas the Government of the People's Republic of China continues to charge innocent Uyghurs with political crimes and to impose the death penalty on those Uyghurs and other political dissidents, contrary to international humanitarian standards;

Whereas the People's Republic of China is implementing a monolingual Chinese language education system that undermines the linguistic basis of Uyghur culture by transitioning minority students from education in their mother tongue to education in Chinese, shifting dramatically away from past policies that provided choice for the Uyghur people; and

Whereas there have been recent armed crackdowns throughout the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region against the entire Uyghur population: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that the Government of the People's Republic of China should—

(1) recognize, and seek to ensure, the linguistic, cultural, and religious rights of the Uyghur people of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region;

(2) immediately release all Uyghur political and religious prisoners that are being held without good cause or evidence, whether those prisoners are held in prisons or are under house arrest;

(3) cease harassment and intimidation of family members and innocent associates of peaceful Uyghur political activists; and

(4) immediately cease all Government-sponsored violence and crackdowns against people in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, including against people involved in peaceful protests or religious or political expression.

SENATE RESOLUTION 156—EX-PRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT REFORM OF OUR NATION'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM SHOULD INCLUDE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FEDERALLY-BACKED INSURANCE POOL

Mr. BROWN (for himself, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. DODD, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. HARKIN, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. REED, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. CASEY, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, Mr. INOUE, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. KAUFMAN, Mr. BURRIS, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. CARDIN, and Mr. AKAKA) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:

S. RES. 156

Whereas in the presence of a federally-backed insurance pool, those Americans who have become unemployed, live in rural and other traditionally underserved areas, or have been unable to attain affordable health insurance would benefit from consumer choice: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate recognizes that any efforts to reform our Nation's health care system should include as an option the establishment of a federally-backed insurance pool to create options for American consumers.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, in my approaching 2½ years in the Senate, I have held some 140 roundtables across my State—from Bryan, to Saint Clairsville, to Ashtabula, to Cincinnati—where I have had the opportunity to listen to health care professionals and advocates and their families speak about their circumstances and struggles. Through these discussions, one thing has become painfully obvious: Health care reform must include insurance reform, and health insurance reform must include the option of a federally backed health insurance plan. That is why I am here today to introduce a resolution, along with 26 of my Senate colleagues, to express the importance of including a federally backed health insurance plan in health care reform.

As we work to reform our health care system, we must protect what works and fix what is broken. It is important that we preserve access to employer-sponsored coverage for those who want to keep their current plan. That is what President Obama is insisting on. If you are satisfied, you keep what coverage you have. But with more and more Americans losing jobs and seeing their health insurance scaled back, it is important that people have access to something else. Americans deserve the chance to go with a private or a federally backed health insurance plan. It is their choice, and this choice is good policy. This choice is good common sense.

Americans are tired of trying to get health insurance coverage and being turned down because they have a pre-existing condition. They are tired of premiums and deductibles and copays that they simply can no longer afford. They are tired of having to fight for every penny when they have paid their insurance premium month after month. They are tired of having to fight for every penny that the insurer owes them when they try to use their insurance and waiting all too often for months to get their claims paid. They are tired of wondering whether their insurance will pay for them at all to see the specialist they need, to get the medicine they need, or to have the operation they need. That is not what insurance should be.

They are tired mostly of the uncertainty surrounding health insurance. If they lose their job, they lose insurance. If they get sick, they can't get insurance. If they submit a claim, it may be paid in 2 or 6 months, or sometimes, even though they are fighting their insurance company and asking and pleading and begging, they may not get the claim paid at all.

To be meaningful, health care reform must be responsive to all of these shortcomings in our current system.

To be responsive, health care reform must address insurance affordability, reliability, and insurance continuity. To achieve these goals, health care reform must provide Ohioans and every American with more options. People should be able to choose whether to keep the coverage they have or to purchase coverage backed by the Federal Government.

A federally backed plan would provide continuity. It would be available in every part of the country, no matter how rural, in western North Carolina or in southeast Ohio. Its benefits would be guaranteed, and its cost sharing would be affordable because of the problems of cost shifting—no ifs, no ands, and no buts. A federally backed plan would be an option but certainly not the only option. Americans who have employer-sponsored coverage would still have that coverage. Americans who have individual coverage through a private insurer would still have that coverage. A federally backed plan would be an option, not a mandate. Some will choose it; others will not. That is the kind of choice we ask for.

One reason such an option is important is because hundreds of thousands of Americans are losing their jobs and have no affordable coverage option. This would give them one. If you have ever tried to purchase affordable coverage in the individual insurance market—and I have—you understand why a federally backed insurance program is so important. If you live in a rural area where quality, affordable coverage is unavailable, you know why a federally backed insurance option is so important. There needs to be an option for people who can't find what they need in the private insurance market, just as Medicare is there for seniors. The federally backed option will give those under 65, if not yet eligible for Medicare, a place to turn.

The resolution I am introducing today, with half of the Democrats in the Senate already signed on as co-sponsors—there will be more later—demonstrates broad support for a federally backed insurance option and health care reform. I encourage all colleagues to support this resolution.

The majority of the HELP Committee are cosponsors of this bill. That is the committee that will help to write the health insurance bill with the Finance Committee. If consumers have more options, including the option to purchase federally backed coverage designed to provide the three things that matter most—affordability, reliability, and continuity, the three things that too often are absent from private insurance plans—we will have gone a long way toward making the U.S. health care system work for every American. That is why this resolution matters. That is why the option of a federally backed insurance plan makes so much sense.