

may actually sound appealing, but as we know, there is no such thing as a free lunch. Let me explain.

Right now, doctors and hospitals make up the difference between what a procedure costs and what the government is willing to pay for it by passing those costs on to private insurers. But doctors and hospitals would likely get even less under a new government health plan, so they would shift even more costs on to private insurers, who would then raise rates for individuals and businesses even higher than they were before. Once these higher rates take effect, employers would be all but certain to start encouraging workers to enroll in the government-run plan.

As a result of all of this, it is easy to see how private market health plans would become more and more expensive and thus less and less affordable and accessible. At some point, private health plans would likely be crowded out altogether, and government care would be the only option left. That is where the delays and the denied care would begin to kick in. Under a government system, Americans would have no choice but to accept all the bureaucratic hassles and the endless time spent on hold waiting for a government service representative to take their calls. They would also have to deal with all of the restrictions of care that inevitably follow. What is being advertised as an option will eventually lead to delays—delays in testing, delays in diagnosis, and delays in treatment.

So the question Americans need to ask themselves is whether this is the reform they really want. Do we really want a government takeover of health care, because that is what a so-called government option would lead to in very short order. Americans need to realize that when someone says “government option,” what could really occur is a government takeover that soon could lead to government bureaucrats denying and delaying care and telling Americans what kind of care they can have.

The irony in all of this is that as a result of a government takeover of health care, the private plans tens of millions of Americans currently enjoy will eventually only be available to just a very few wealthy Americans—to those who are able to pay for more health care than they currently have and like. According to a recent study, 119 million Americans would lose the private coverage they currently have as a consequence of a government plan. The best options would only remain available to a select few.

Over the last few months, we have seen government getting involved in virtually every aspect of our economy. Washington is suddenly running the banks and the auto companies. Now it is thinking about running America's health care. The results, I am afraid, would not lead to the kinds of reforms Americans really want in their health care. Instead, it would lead to a system that most Americans would deeply regret.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the 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 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 97, the nomination of Hillary Chandler Tompkins to be Solicitor of the Department of the Interior; that the nomination be confirmed; that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that no further motions be in order; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; that upon confirmation, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; and that the Senate then resume legislative session.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and I will have to object, I would just say to my friend from New Mexico, we have not been able to get that nomination cleared yet on this side, but we will be consulting with the Republican colleagues and at some point let him know whether it is possible to go forward. Therefore, I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, let me briefly describe the circumstances that caused me to make this unanimous-consent request. I am obviously disappointed there has been an objection raised to the confirmation of Ms. Tompkins. I am advised that one or more Republican Members have placed an anonymous hold on her nomination.

The Solicitor of the Department of the Interior—the office to which the President has nominated Ms. Tompkins—is one of the most important posts in the Department of the Interior and one of the most important legal positions in our government. The Department of the Interior has broad authority over the administration and care of our public lands and natural resources. Its many offices and bureaus face daily a broad range of legal issues requiring special expertise in public land law, mining law, water rights law,

Indian law, and wildlife law. The Solicitor is the Department's general counsel. She is solely responsible for the legal work of the Department. By law, all the legal work of the Department is performed under the supervision and direction of the Solicitor. She is responsible for the interpretation and application of the legal authority affecting all of the actions taken under the Department of the Interior's programs and operations.

The job requires a deep knowledge of the law, professional experience, and sound judgment. In my view, the President has nominated such a person—a person with demonstrated ability and stature in this field in the person of Hillary Tompkins. She earned a law degree at Stanford University Law School in 1996. She served as a trial attorney in the Environment and Natural Resources Division of the Department of Justice, as a special Assistant U.S. Attorney in Brooklyn, as an associate in Sonosky Chambers, one of the Nation's leading law firms specializing in Native American law, as chief counsel to the Governor of New Mexico, and as an adjunct law professor at the University of New Mexico Law School.

As chief counsel to Governor Bill Richardson, Ms. Tompkins demonstrated her ability to lead and manage a team of lawyers, to oversee the general counsels of multiple agencies, and to render sound legal advice and counsel.

She will bring to the Solicitor's office considerable expertise in the areas of environmental, natural resources, water, and Indian law, as well as experience in the areas of constitutional law, administrative law, and the legislative process.

In addition, Ms. Tompkins has a compelling personal story. She was born on the Navajo reservation, and although she was raised in New Jersey, she has not lost touch with her Navajo heritage. If confirmed, she will be the first Native American, and only the second woman, to hold the office of Solicitor.

It is unclear to me why anyone would object to confirming Ms. Tompkins. She is clearly well qualified for the position. At her hearing in April and in the weeks since then, Senators on the other side of the aisle have expressed their concerns about departmental policies, over which Ms. Tompkins has had no control and no responsibility. Secretary Salazar has bent over backwards to address those concerns, and it is my understanding all of those concerns now have been addressed.

In any event, Senators had chosen to place holds on David Hayes's nomination to be the Deputy Secretary of the Interior, rather than on Ms. Tompkins' nomination, pending resolution of their concerns. The holds on Mr. Hayes's nomination were lifted before the recess, and he and all of the other Department of the Interior nominees have now been confirmed. Only Ms. Tompkins' nomination is still being blocked.

Many of the most pressing problems facing the Department of the Interior

are legal ones. During its final weeks, the previous administration took a number of controversial actions. In its rush to lock in those actions before it left office, the previous administration failed to give adequate consideration to various legal requirements. As a result, several of those actions have been overturned by the courts.

Secretary Salazar has inherited this legacy and is doing his best to address these problems. But he needs a Solicitor. More than 4 months into the new administration, the Department of the Interior should not still be without its top legal officer. And Ms. Tompkins should not still be the victim of anonymous holds.

DEATH OF ANASTASIOS "TASS" HATJIKIRIAKOS

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I was deeply sorry to learn this morning of the death of a long-time Senate employee and friend, "Mr. Tass." An integral part of the Senate Resataurants staff for many years, he was a great friend to me and to my office.

He died on Sunday from injuries received when he was hit by a car in Silver Spring. All of us who knew him and appreciated his service to the Senate join his family and friends in mourning his loss. He—and they—are in our thoughts and prayers.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes.

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

REGINA MCCARTHY

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to offer my concerns regarding the nomination of Regina McCarthy to be the Administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation in the Environmental Protection Agency.

For the past few weeks, I have been seeking responses from the nominee and the administration on their efforts to use the Clean Air Act to regulate climate change.

I have put a hold on her because I have serious concerns about the EPA using the Clean Air Act to regulate climate change.

I want to know the plan that the nominee will implement. I want to know how she will protect businesses, farms, hospitals, and nursing homes from the effects of the EPA's endangerment finding.

As you know, the endangerment finding designates CO₂ as a harmful pollutant to public health under the Clean Air Act.

The finding's effects on the Clean Air Act will require EPA to regulate any building, structure, facility or installation that emits more than 250 tons of a CO₂ in a year.

The result would be thousands of lost jobs, with no environmental benefit to show for it.

Hospitals, schools, farms, commercial building and nursing homes will be required to obtain preconstruction permits for their activities. EPA says this will not occur, that they will use discretion and good judgment.

According to legal scholars, the statutory language in the Clean Air Act is mandatory and does not leave any room for EPA to exercise discretion or create exceptions.

The only jobs that will be created are in law firms as the litigation bonanza begins. EPA will be sued by environmental groups wanting to eliminate exempted sectors. The EPA will also be sued by industries not exempted.

It will, as Democrat Congressman JOHN DINGELL stated, be a glorious mess.

I have nothing personal against Mrs. McCarthy. I simply wanted an answer to a question, the same question Americans all across our country want answered: How are you going to protect them?

I still do not have a credible answer to this question. I am tired of the stonewalling.

Mrs. McCarthy believes that she can not answer the question until she is confirmed by the Senate. That answer, I believe, is not good enough.

She has also stated that she wanted to be informed of any potential lawsuit. She stated she wanted to discuss the issue with the litigants in the hopes of convincing them not to sue.

Government officials can't go around the country trying to convince every litigant, whether it be a national environmental group or a local group, not to sue.

I have also posed this same question to the EPA Administrator in the hopes that she could provide EPA's plan on behalf of Ms. McCarthy.

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson says that she can target what she regulates. She claims she will only target cars and trucks.

That is setting the precedent of picking winners and losers. We do not know what standards will be applied to make those decisions. We do not know what role politics will play in these decisions.

Administrator Jackson's statement also ignores the regulatory cascade that the endangerment finding and the motor vehicle emission standards will certainly trigger.

Litigators and courts will drive much of this job-killing regulation.

We have a nominee to head up the EPA's Air Office, Ms. Regina McCarthy. We have an Administrator of the EPA and we have a climate and energy czar who is supposed to coordinate climate change policy for the administration.

Carol Browner, the climate and energy czar has not been confirmed by Congress. We do not know who is developing a roadmap for how to use the Clean Air Act to regulate climate change.

What jobs in what industries will be kept? Which industries will be penalized? Who will be held accountable for making these decisions?

The economic consequences of the ticking timebomb will be devastating.

By the EPA's own estimate, the typical preconstruction permit in 2007 cost each applicant \$125,000 and 866 hours to obtain.

Ranchers or private nursing homes have no background in this area. They will need to hire lawyers. They will need to hire experts. They will be taking time out of their day to figure out all this redtape.

This will create such a fog of uncertainty with investors and small businesses. This makes small businesses even riskier to lend money to; nobody will know how much this will cost their business.

With lending having already ground to a halt, this is hardly the right move to help our economy.

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, there are 1.2 million schools, hospitals, nursing homes, farms, small businesses, and other commercial entities that would be vulnerable to new controls, monitoring, paperwork, and litigation.

If even 1 percent of the 1.2 million have to get preconstruction permits, that would mean 12,000 new preconstruction permits a year.

By the EPA's own analysis, if permitting is increased by just two to three thousand, this would impose "significant new costs and an administrative burden on permitting authorities."

According to the EPA, this "could overwhelm permitting authorities."

The net result of all of this will be thousands of jobs lost.

As I have stated previously on the floor, if the administration can not tell us by what legal authority they can pick winners and losers, if the administration can not provide economic certainty to lenders and businesses, if the administration does not know how they will deal with all the thousands of new preconstruction permits, they should take this job killing option off the table.

There appears to be such a frenzy of political pressure from special interests to pass something on climate change.

The pressure has reached the point where enacting any climate change policy before Copenhagen is more important than addressing its aftermath.

The thinking is, just get something done on climate change. We will deal with the impacts later.

That's not how you make good policy.

But that is exactly what is going on here.

The President's own attorneys, from a host of Federal agencies, have expressed concerns with this approach.

Their concerns were contained in a memo.

This memo is a well thought out, scientific and legal critique of using the Clean Air Act to regulate climate change by the Obama administration.