

believe all of us should have health care coverage and that nobody should be left out of the system. The real debate is how we accomplish that goal in an affordable and sustainable way. In that regard, I think the evidence is overwhelming that we must end the private insurance company domination of health care in our country and move toward a publicly funded, single-payer, Medicare-for-all approach.

Our current private health insurance system is the most costly, wasteful, complicated, and bureaucratic in the world. Its function is not to provide quality health care for all of our people but to make huge profits for the people who own the companies. That is what private health insurance is about. With thousands of different health benefit programs designed to maximize profits, private health insurance companies spend an incredible 30 percent of each health care dollar on administration and billing. Thirty cents of every dollar is not going to doctors, nurses, medicine, medical personnel; it is going to bureaucracy and administration. Included in that spending are not only general administration and billing but exorbitant CEO compensation packages, advertising, lobbying, and campaign contributions. Public programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and the VA are administered for far less money.

In recent years, while we have experienced an acute shortage of primary health care doctors as well as nurses, as well as dentists, and many other health care personnel, we are paying for a huge increase in health care bureaucrats and bill collectors. Over the last three decades, the number of administrative personnel has grown by 25 times the number of physicians. Instead of investing in primary health care, instead of investing in doctors, instead of addressing the nursing shortage, where our health care dollars are going is to health insurance bureaucrats who spend half their lives on the telephone telling us we are not covered for the procedures we thought we had paid for. That is a dumb way to spend health care dollars.

Further, and not surprisingly, while health care costs are soaring, so are the profits of private health insurance companies. From 2003 to 2007, the combined profits of the Nation's major health insurance companies increased by 170 percent. Health care costs are soaring; people can't afford health insurance. Yet the profits of the private health insurance companies have gone up by 170 percent from 2003 to 2007. While more and more Americans are losing their jobs and their health insurance, the top executives in the industry are receiving lavish compensation packages. It is not just William McGuire, the former head of United Health, who several years ago accumulated stock options worth an estimated \$1.6 billion, or CIGNA CEO Edward Hanway, who made more than \$120 million in the last 5 years. It is not just

them. It is the reality that CEO compensation for the top seven health insurance companies now averages \$14.2 million. Forty-six million Americans have no health insurance, more are underinsured, and we apparently have the money to pay exorbitant compensation packages to the heads of private health insurance companies.

Moving toward a national health insurance program, which provides cost-effective, universal, comprehensive, and quality health care for all, will not be easy. That is an understatement. It will not be easy. The powerful special interests, the insurance companies, the drug companies, and the medical equipment suppliers, among others, will wage an all-out fight to make sure we maintain the current system which enables them to make billions and billions of dollars every year in profits.

In recent years, these special interests have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on lobbying, on campaign contributions, and advertising, and with unlimited resources. They can make out a check as big as they need. They will continue to spend as much as they need in order to preserve this dysfunctional health care system from which they profit so much.

But at the end of the day, as difficult as it may be, the fight for a national health care program will prevail. Like the civil rights movement, the struggle for women's rights, and other grassroots efforts, justice in this country is often delayed, but it will not be denied. We shall overcome.

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

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I ask to speak in morning business.

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

FAMILY SMOKING PREVENTION AND TOBACCO CONTROL ACT

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I have come to the floor to offer a few comments on the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, the bill on which we will shortly be voting cloture, I hope.

I wish to begin by paying tribute and thanking Senator KENNEDY. I have had occasions to discuss this subject with him more than once. No one has been more dedicated, worked harder or longer to see this day on the floor than Senator TED KENNEDY. I thank him for it. I hope once this bill gains cloture we will pass it swiftly, and it will become the law of the land, and it will, in fact, save lives.

I would like to make three main points. The first is that tobacco is the

leading preventable cause of death in this country; the second is the huge financial cost to tobacco; and finally, the relationship between tobacco and cancer.

We know tobacco harms the health of Americans—those who use cigarettes and those who are exposed to second-hand smoke. But I think what most people do not know is that every year, 400,000 Americans die from tobacco use. That makes tobacco the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, killing more people each year than HIV/AIDS, illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle accidents, suicides, and murders combined. That is why it is the leading preventable cause of death.

In California, every year 36,600 adults die from their smoking; in Michigan, the number is 14,500; in New York, 25,400; in Wyoming, a very small State, 700 people die every year. Every State in this country loses people prematurely to death from smoking.

We know the high cost, the human cost of tobacco use, but I think people also do not realize my second point, and that is the tremendous financial cost. Smoking costs our health care system \$96 billion every year. States pay \$13.3 billion every year in Medicaid expenses and the Federal Government spends \$17.6 billion. Medicare pays \$27.6 billion and the VA and other Federal programs spend an additional \$9.6 billion. The rest of this cost, about \$28 billion, is borne by private payers. So the financial cost is \$96 billion a year.

The Senate is about to embark on the enormous task of expanding health care coverage and access for the 47 million Americans without insurance. Imagine that instead of spending \$96 billion every year to treat tobacco-related illnesses, we could use this money to improve our health care system. It could fund a significant portion of health reform. One, we could nearly triple the budget of the National Institutes of Health, a very good thing. Two, only 2 months of tobacco-related health spending could provide a year of health insurance for every uninsured child in America. Three—let me put it another way—we could provide health insurance to every uninsured child in America and still have \$80 billion left over. That is the inordinate, inexplicable cost of tobacco products in this country. Instead, we continue to spend \$96 billion every year on preventable illness caused by tobacco.

Passing this bill will not immediately end smoking or the illness it causes, but helping Americans to live healthier lives is a critical component of any long-term reform of our health care system. I believe we should view this bill as a sound, critical, and important first step on the road to broader reform.

Tobacco and cancer. My life has been surrounded by cancer, so I am very sensitive on this point. Without a doubt, cancer is one of the most expensive tobacco-related illnesses. Cigarette

smoking alone accounts for approximately 30 percent of cancer deaths annually. It is the leading cause of lung cancer, and lung cancer is the No. 1 cancer killer in this country.

Since coming to the Senate, I have tried to be committed to finding cures and treatments that will end death and suffering from cancer. My goal is in my lifetime. As I tell people, I am not that young anymore, so I want to see it come fast and soon. I have had the opportunity to talk with countless experts in oncology, biomedical research, and medicine about how to meet this goal. They all say one thing: Go after tobacco. We will not end cancer until we end tobacco use. This bill takes a major step in that direction.

In 2007, the President's cancer panel called on Congress to authorize the FDA to strictly regulate tobacco products and product marketing. This same report called the tobacco industry "a vector of disease and death that can no more be ignored in seeking solutions to the tobacco problem than mosquitos can be ignored in seeking to eradicate malaria." I think that is a very good quote. I think it is really true.

Most people associate tobacco use with lung cancer, as I just have. But according to the National Cancer Institute, 90 percent of lung cancer deaths among men can be attributed to smoking—90 percent—and 80 percent of these same deaths attributed to women are from smoking as well. But there are a variety of other cancers caused by tobacco products: cancer of the mouth, of the nasal cavities, of the larynx, of the throat, of the esophagus—esophageal cancer is increasing, for some strange reason, and I suspect this has to do with it—stomach, liver, pancreas, kidney, bladder, cervix, and even acute myeloid leukemia. There is so much we do not know about cancer—how it is caused, how it progresses, how to treat it effectively. But we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that many types are caused at least in part by tobacco use. So I firmly believe the passage of this bill will lead to a reduction in cancer, and most importantly to cancer deaths, and it will give the FDA the ability to make the cigarettes currently available less toxic and less carcinogenic and less addicting.

Let me give an example. A study by researchers—namely, David Burns and Christy Anderson, both of the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine—suggests that cigarette smoke today may double the risk of lung cancer compared to cigarettes smoked by Americans 40 years ago. Now, that is amazing.

Remember all the unfiltered cigarettes of yesteryear? You would think those cigarettes would be stronger; right? No, they are saying. They attribute this to a change in the chemicals which have been added in recent years to cigarettes. The researchers compared cigarettes in the United States with cigarettes in Australia, and here is what they found: Cigarettes

smoked in Australia have a much lower level of a compound known as tobacco-specific nitrosamines. This chemical is a carcinogen. It causes a type of lung cancer called adenocarcinoma. Rates of this lung cancer are much lower in Australia, leading researchers to conclude that the contents of cigarettes are exposing American smokers to a higher risk.

This suggests that lung cancer rates could be reduced by regulatory control of additives to tobacco products. That is what this bill will do. It will give the Food and Drug Administration the ability to make the cigarettes smoked in this country less dangerous, less addictive. They can ratchet down chemical components and addictive qualities that are added to tobacco to increase the addiction.

Under this bill, the FDA can reduce carcinogens such as tobacco-specific nitrosamines. Some Americans may still smoke, but the products they will smoke will be less likely to give them lung cancer. I think that is a good thing, and I hope you would agree with me.

It is time to close the decades-long loophole that has allowed tobacco to become the one product that is sold and advertised without any government oversight—without any government oversight. Think about that. Food is regulated, consumer products are regulated, medicine and medical devices are regulated, products designed to save lives are regulated. Yet tobacco companies sell products that, when used as directed, No. 1, addict people; No. 2, make them sick; and, No. 3, in some cases, kill them. So if there is one industry that deserves the strictest scrutiny of the Federal Government, it is in fact tobacco.

So I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation. I know it is difficult, but I am one who has participated in something that the American Cancer Society started called C-Change. This is where the cancer society has brought together some 65 groups—advocates, individuals, providers, government officials—to deal with cancer and what causes cancer. Madam President, the one constant through all the discussions, the one thing the physicians and the scientific community were the strongest on is that tobacco causes cancer, and that is just an inescapable fact. This bill deals with it. It provides regulation, it allows for the ratcheting down of addictive components, it allows for the control of chemicals that go into tobacco products, and it will, in fact, save lives.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DEMINT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NORTH KOREA

Mr. DEMINT. Madam President, all of us know the United States is facing many challenges at home and abroad today. We are in the middle of an economic crisis. Many Americans are losing their jobs. We are also being tested by our enemies and potential enemies all around the world. We have certainly seen Iran continue its nuclear weapons program. It snubbed its nose at the international community as the international community asked it to halt.

Recently, perhaps the most alarming threat to our security has come from North Korea. We have seen them fire test missiles over the last year, actually test a very powerful nuclear weapon, and now they are telling us they are going to test a rocket that is capable of reaching our shores. In the middle of this, they kidnapped two Americans and sentenced them to, I think, 12 years in a labor camp.

Throughout all this, America has talked tough, but I am afraid North Korea believes we are all talk.

The problem with our position with North Korea at this point is there are other rogue nations looking at what is happening and seeing that they can basically ignore the United States and the international community and continue to be a growing threat to all of us.

It is very important that the United States not reward this behavior as we have done for North Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was added to the State Department's "State Sponsors of Terrorism" list in 1988 for activities ranging from the protection of Japanese terrorists to its role in the bombing of a Korean airliner. Since that time, North Korea has remained, as a matter of documented fact, a sponsor of terrorism.

Last June, President Bush announced his intention to remove North Korea from the list. At no time before or since has anyone said that North Korea ceased to be a state sponsor of terror. The delisting of North Korea was a carrot waved in front of Kim Jong Il as part of a well-meaning but extremely dangerous attempt to deal diplomatically with the urgent problem of North Korea's illegal nuclear programs. Secretary of State Clinton acknowledges that North Korea was delisted only in exchange for North Korea's commitment to abandon its nuclear weapons program and submit to outside verification.

Since then, I think as most of us know, North Korea has gone further in its campaign of militant destabilization of the world than ever before. It has detonated a large nuclear bomb. It has launched missiles capable of hitting our allies. It has withdrawn from the six-party talks. It has reprocessed spent fuel rods. It has withdrawn from the United Nation's treaty that ended