

and other places. This is going to make them sit up and take notice because the concept we saw yesterday is perfect for developing nations that do not have the infrastructure to handle the larger reactors. It is perfect for small towns and factories all over America that may need only 125 megawatts and cannot afford something larger. It is what is called “distributed generation”—producing electricity onsite instead of wheeling it from deserts or mountaintops hundreds or thousands of miles away. As the old saying goes, “Small is beautiful.”

One of the things we are going to have to face as we think about what kind of electricity we want for the future is the landscape of America. You know, landscape is a part of our environment as well, and the landscape becomes a real concern. When we look at the energy sprawl that could be created by some of the renewable energy projects, it takes a lot of space to produce a little bit of electricity.

For example, a big nuclear plant can be located on about 1 square mile. That is one that produces 1,000 megawatts. To get that much electricity from biomass, which means woodchips or dead trees, you would need a forest the size of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park—that is 550,000 acres—and the number of trucks that would be coming in and out to haul the stuff in and back out would be in the hundreds every day. You would be talking about millions of tons of woodchips and dead trees a year. So that is for just one big nuclear plant equivalent of electricity. On the other hand, to create the same amount of electricity from wind turbines that you would get from one nuclear plant, you would have to cover about 270 square miles.

In our part of the world, in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, we do not really want to see these 50-story towers with blades that are as long as football fields, with flashing lights on top that can be seen for 20 miles. We do not want to see them along the foothills of the Smokies, and I doubt the people of Virginia want to see them along the Blue Ridge Parkway, and I doubt they want to see them in Pennsylvania or in the White Mountains. And in the Eastern United States, they only work on the ridgelines, and they do not work very well. That is why there is only one wind farm in the entire Southeastern United States. It is in Tennessee and only operates 18 percent of the time, and part of that time is at night when we have a lot of extra electricity. So that does not work very well.

The Senator from California, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, with whom I work on the Appropriations Interior Subcommittee, has expressed her concern about the size of the solar thermal plants proposed for the Mojave Desert, which she has tried to protect for years. They would have to be 5 miles on each side in order to get a decent amount of electricity, and that is only during the daytime.

You have the wind and you have the Sun, but you still need either the coal plant or the nuclear plant. So I believe there is a place for wind: far offshore, the middle of Lake Michigan, or in parts of the wind corridor. I believe there is a great future for solar because solar power comes during the peak times, during the day when we can use it. Perhaps we can use our rooftops to provide the space. So we think that is more promising for our area. I think biomass is useful, but I have already expressed how large an area it would take to produce a little electricity. And we might be able to get a few hundred megawatts out of the Mississippi River by putting turbines in the water.

So how are we going to reindustrialize America over the next 25 years? How are we going to keep those auto suppliers and assembly plants and aluminum plants and even the new plants making solar in our country if we have sky-high costs of unreliable electricity? We need another option.

While we are cleaning up the coal plants, while we are figuring out renewable electricity, we now have another way to skin the cat; that is, the small nuclear reactor, 125 megawatts. That is about the size of electricity that is produced by Fort Loudoun Dam in our State. It is significant, but it is a lot smaller than the big ones we are used to.

What I really hope is that when Americans see this user-friendly reactor sitting underground—that is another aspect: A lot of it, including the storage of the waste, goes underground. Another aspect is it is only two stories tall. Most people think nuclear plants, the big ones—they see these big cooling towers. That is to cool the water that has to be used. But these small ones are air-cooled, so they don't use much water. That is a great advantage. And they are not an eyesore, they are two stories tall. I mean, remember, the wind turbines are 50-stories tall, producing almost no electricity in a consistent way. The nuclear reactor is producing low-cost energy 90 percent of the time, and it is two stories tall.

So I think with this development people may begin to rethink nuclear power. It is already happening out there. People are recognizing that the dangers of nuclear have been widely exaggerated, there is nothing to be fearful about, and once we realize that, we are going to see nuclear power for what it is: an appropriate technology that will enable us to meet our future energy needs without overwhelming the world with pollution and warming the planet.

So I hope my colleagues in the Senate will join me in saying congratulations to Babcock & Wilcox and especially to the Tennessee Valley Authority for leading the country in this renaissance of nuclear energy. Congratulations, good luck, and I hope there are many of these projects on the drawing boards.

This is the way for us to clean the air, deal with global warming, and at

the same time have low-cost, reliable electricity in large amounts so that we can keep our jobs here.

There is one other aspect to this that I ought to mention. As we talk about the different forms of energy, people worry that so much of what it takes to build the wind turbines or the solar plants or even the large nuclear plants, and how they may be manufactured overseas and that the jobs are there and not here. All of the jobs for the small nuclear reactors will be in the United States—virtually all of them. So this is not only American-made energy, all of the parts that go to building what I hope will be hundreds of these small reactors over time can be made and will be made right here in the United States.

I yield the floor, and 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. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business.

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

(The remarks of Mr. THUNE pertaining to the introduction of S. 1242 are printed in today's RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

#### HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I wish to say I have great concern not just about the ownership interests the Federal Government already has in financial institutions and in auto companies and in insurance companies but also about what we are hearing might happen with health care.

My view is, having a government plan, a government takeover of health care would again be an intervention into the marketplace on a scale and on a level I don't think most Americans want to see. It is referred to around here as a public plan option, but let's call it what it is: It is a government plan. It is a government-run health care system. The more you have the government involved in the decisions with respect to health care, the more the government is going to dictate many of the decisions that are going to be made and traditionally are made between a patient and a physician, in consultation with each other, between a consumer and a health care provider. Those types of interactions occur today in the marketplace. If the government is imposed into that particular situation, it seems to me at least we are going to have the government making more and more decisions with respect to health care: Which treatments are going to be approved;

which ones are effective; which ones are cost-effective. And that critical, fundamental relationship between a physician and a patient, we could be creating barriers in that relationship that are not going to provide for the high quality, optimum level of health care and treatment we have experienced in this country for a long time.

Clearly, I think we all have to acknowledge there are things that need to improve in the health care system in this country. We need to reform our health care system. We need to bring the costs down. We need to figure out ways to make health care available and accessible to more Americans so that many of those who don't have health care have access to it and to get costs under control. But there are lots of ways that can be done by building upon the strengths we have in the current system; not throwing it completely away in exchange for a government-run system, which would ration health care, limit the amount of choices Americans would have, and cost the taxpayers an awful lot of money. Because I think, at the end of the day, most of the estimates that have been done—and it is hard to know because we don't have a specific proposal out there yet that has been costed or a revenue source that has been identified for it, but I think all the estimates we have seen so far suggest that this plan, the health care plan that is being proposed by the President and by the Democratic leadership in the Congress, is going to cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$1 trillion to \$2 trillion. We don't know exactly. I have heard \$1.2 trillion, \$1.5 trillion. I have heard up to \$2 trillion, but we know that is an enormous amount of money, and that revenue has to come from somewhere. One-sixth of the American economy today, one-sixth of our economy, entire economy in this country is health care, headed toward one-fifth. So we are going to hand the keys over to the Federal Government and allow them to control an enormously large component of the American economy—one-sixth of it today and it will be one-fifth in just a few years. It seems to me that would be a bad precedent and something, again, that would lead us further and further down a path of greater control for the Federal Government in our private economy. I don't think that is good for health care for Americans. I don't think that is good again for American business, for the economy or for our ability to create jobs.

The bill I introduced, as I said, is designed to get at the TARP moneys that are going to be paid back in and hopefully getting the government out of the car business, the government out of the banking business, and the government out of the insurance business, but I also view those as almost what I would characterize as gateway drugs that are going to lead the way for the nationalization or the government takeover of health care. A government plan is not

a good way to do business, and it is certainly not in the best interests of Americans, who, I think, even though there may be those who want to see the costs of our current health care system come down, those who have coverage today, most of them would argue we have a system that is pretty effective; that when you need to get seen by a doctor, when you need to get treated, when you need to use some of the modern equipment and technology we have available and that is there today—and I think that is very much in jeopardy if you allow the government to intervene and to impose itself into that decision-making process and begin to ration care.

#### DEBT AND DEFICITS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, one final point I wish to make is all of this sort of ties back to what I think is the pattern, the precedent we have seen so far in this Congress, and that is incredible amounts of spending, incredible amounts of borrowing. The stimulus bill started it off to the tune of about \$800 billion. The budget we passed this year on the discretionary, nondefense domestic side was 8.9 percent more year over year than the previous year. The omnibus bill we passed—which was unfinished business from the last Congress—was 8.3 percent over the previous year, which, again, more than doubled the rate of inflation. We have all these Federal obligations and liabilities that are being created by virtue of these interventions in the marketplace. We have the TARP program; we have all this taxpayer exposure out there, all this spending, and this year we know we are going to have a \$1.8 trillion deficit which dwarfs anything we have ever seen in history and as far as the eye can see. For the next decade, we are looking at about a \$1 trillion, on average, annual deficit.

Our debt to GDP is headed to historically high levels if predictions are accurate. I think the predictions are optimistic in terms of what we are going to see in economic growth, unemployment, inflation, and interest rates. Even if the projections with respect to the economic indicators are accurate, we are going to see, 10 years from now, the public debt, as a percent of the GDP, reach over 80 percent—a rate we have not seen literally since the end of World War II.

These are very troubling signs. I think they should be warning flags, warning signs to the people in this country that this level of borrowing, the amount of spending, the amount of taxation, with the new obligations in the health care bill, is too much for our economy to bear and for the American taxpayer to bear.

What the President came out with earlier this week is a new announcement that, all of a sudden, we have gotten religion, and we are going to submit all of the new spending and all of these programs now to what is known

as pay-go. I will submit for the RECORD an editorial from the Wall Street Journal from a couple days ago.

I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal, June 11, 2009]

#### THE “PAYGO” COVERUP

Some things in politics you can't make up, such as President Obama's re-re-endorsement Tuesday of “pay-as-you-go” budgeting. Coming after \$787 billion in nonstimulating stimulus, a \$410 billion omnibus to wrap up fiscal 2009, a \$3.5 trillion 2010 budget proposal, sundry bailouts and a 13-figure health-care spending expansion still to come, this latest vow of fiscal chastity is like Donald Trump denouncing self-promotion.

Check that. Even The Donald would find this one too much to sell.

But Mr. Obama must think the press and public are dumb enough to buy it, because there he was Tuesday re-selling the same “paygo” promises that Democrats roll out every election. Paygo is “very simple,” the President claimed. “Congress can only spend a dollar if it saves a dollar elsewhere.”

That's what Democrats also promised in 2006, with Nancy Pelosi vowing that “the first thing” House Democrats would do if they took Congress was reimpose paygo rules that “Republicans had let lapse.” By 2008, Speaker Pelosi had let those rules lapse no fewer than 12 times, to make way for \$400 billion in deficit spending. Mr. Obama repeated the paygo pledge during his 2008 campaign, and instead we have witnessed the greatest peacetime spending binge in U.S. history. As a share of GDP, spending will hit an astonishing 28.5% in fiscal 2009, with the deficit hitting 13% and projected to stay at 4% to 5% for years to come.

The truth is that paygo is the kind of budget gimmick that gives gimmickry a bad name. As Mr. Obama knows but won't tell voters, paygo only applies to new or expanded entitlement programs, not to existing programs such as Medicare, this year growing at a 9.2% annual rate. Nor does paygo apply to discretionary spending, set to hit \$1.4 trillion in fiscal 2010, or 40% of the budget.

This loophole matters, because on the very day Mr. Obama was hailing paygo the House Appropriations Committee was gleefully approving a 12% increase in 2010 nondefense discretionary spending, the third year running that Democrats have proposed double-digit increases. Or consider that the 2010 budget resolution included a \$2 billion increase for low-income heating assistance as an entitlement change that should be subject to paygo. But Congressional Democrats simply classified it as discretionary spending, thereby avoiding the need for \$2 billion in cuts elsewhere. C'est-la-paygo.

Mr. Obama's new proposal includes even more loopholes. There's an exception for Congress's annual alternative-minimum tax “patch,” which is worth at least \$576 billion over 10 years; for any of the Bush tax cuts that Mr. Obama decides he wants to extend past 2010; and to protect against planned cuts in Medicare doctor payments. These carve-outs alone spare Democrats from having to come up with some \$2.5 trillion in spending cuts or new taxes. To add insult to profligacy, the rules also allow the Administration to run huge early deficits for its looming health-care bonanza, and only pay for it later—say, after 2012.

The President also revived the myth that paygo was somehow responsible for eliminating budget deficits during the Clinton