

Alysia is a 21-year-old woman from Las Vegas. She needs surgery for the kidney disease with which she has suffered since she was born, but because she recently lost her job, health care is not part of her life anymore. Alysia has done everything she can to try to get help. Medicaid tells her she doesn't qualify because she isn't pregnant, doesn't have children, doesn't have disability insurance. Insurance companies refuse to cover her, calling her kidney disorder a preexisting condition. Everyone else calls this a tragedy.

These stories are as real as they come. The letters are written by people who play by the rules and don't understand why the health care system doesn't play by the rules. They are written from the heart, and many are written through pain, tears, and uncertainty. Sadly, though, they are not unique. Many Americans like Lisa skip routine medical checkups or, like Braden, live one accident away from bankruptcy or one sickness away from bankruptcy or, like Alysia, fear for the worst as they fight through the red-tape.

Our Republican colleagues like things, obviously, just the way they are, the status quo. They have committed themselves to a strategy of misinformation and misrepresentation. I heard it again on the radio this morning—government health care. In fact, one Senator said that if he heard a Republican Senator say anything other than “government health care”—and he instructed them not to use “public choice” or “public option”—he jokingly said they will have to put some money in the kitty.

Misinformation and misrepresentation is not where we should be. This, together with their attempt to delay, is only going to hurt people like Alysia, Braden, and Lisa.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the health care system in this country is in urgent need of reform. People are frustrated with the soaring cost of care, and they are frustrated that so many of their fellow Americans lack the coverage they need that they should be able to expect in a nation as prosperous as ours. People are also worried about the enormous burden rising health care costs is placing on American businesses, which are being forced to put off pay increases and lay off workers to cope with rising insurance premiums. And now people are concerned that a new government health plan that is being talked about will make all of these problems even worse.

For weeks, many of us have been warning about plans for a government

takeover of health care along the lines of takeovers we have seen in other areas of the private sector. Now the details of those plans are coming to light, and they raise two questions: How much is all this going to cost, and how are we going to pay for it?

Let's take just three proposals in the plan that is currently taking shape in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, the details of which are just beginning to emerge.

First, there is a massive expansion of Medicaid. Here is a program that was originally established as a partnership between the Federal Government and the States to assist the poor and disabled and which has become fiscally unsustainable. Yet, rather than reform this broken program, the HELP Committee is proposing a massive new expansion.

Second, the HELP Committee bill includes massive new subsidies for Americans with incomes higher than \$100,000 a year. The purpose of these subsidies is to help defray the cost of rising insurance premiums. We all know health insurance is too expensive, but we ought to be working to lower those premiums, not opening the Federal checkbook to drive them up even higher.

Third, the HELP Committee bill establishes a new so-called prevention and public health investment fund. The details of this fund are a little murky, but early indications are that it will direct billions of dollars to things such as having the government build sidewalks and government-subsidized farmers markets. The idea here is to use tax dollars to encourage healthier lifestyles. But at a time when Americans are buried under medical bills and frightened about losing the coverage they have, farmers markets and sidewalks are not the reforms they have in mind.

Americans want serious health care reform, not expansion of programs that are already fiscally unsustainable, subsidies that disguise rising costs instead of addressing their causes, and billions for sidewalks and asparagus. These are precisely the kinds of proposals that mask the underlying problems and cause people to lose faith in government solutions, and they are simply not acceptable.

The details we are seeing from the HELP Committee should make us more skeptical of a government health plan, not less, and they should underscore for every American the need for the kinds of real, comprehensive reforms some of us have been calling for over the last few weeks.

The irony in this whole debate is that we are being told that America's fiscal future will be jeopardized if we do not allow these people who are proposing these outrageous so-called reforms to take over the entire health care system.

Preliminary estimates for this flawed legislative proposal are simply staggering. Just yesterday, the Congressional Budget Office released an esti-

mate of just part—just part—of the HELP Committee bill. Focusing on just this one section, the CBO determined the bill will spend \$1.3 trillion over 10 years, even though 37 million people would still be left without health insurance. Let me say that again, Mr. President. Just part of the HELP Committee bill would spend \$1.3 trillion over 10 years, after which 37 million Americans would still be uninsured. Let me say that again, as I just have. One section of the bill—one section—\$1.3 trillion, and 37 million still uninsured. And this isn't even a complete evaluation of the bill. Large proposals that will have a significant impact on the cost, such as the Medicaid expansion and a government-run plan, have not even been factored in yet.

Moreover, according to details of the HELP Committee plan, a new health care exchange would result in 15 million Americans losing the employer coverage they already have—further evidence if you like what you have, you may well lose it under a government-run plan.

How does the HELP Committee propose we pay for all this? Well, its proposal is full of creative new ways to spend taxpayer dollars, but it offers little in offsetting the cost of the overall bill. They will either charge the money to the national credit card or, more likely, raise taxes on working families. In other words, more spending, higher taxes, and even more debt. So far, some of the taxes under discussion include a new tax on soda, juice boxes, the creation of a new tax on jobs, and new limits on charitable deductions.

Based on the CBO estimate, these taxes would only be the beginning. The health care proposal being put together is not only extremely defective, it will cost a fortune. And that cost will come straight out of the taxpayers' pocket-book.

The bottom line is this: Under the illusion of reform, Americans will be asked to give up the care they like for something worse, and then they will be taxed to the hilt to pay for it. Americans don't want changes that make the entire health care system as unsustainable as Medicaid, and they don't want to go broke covering the cost.

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 of morning business for 1 hour, 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, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the second half.

The Senator from New Jersey.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for 15 minutes, after which the Senator from Illinois be recognized.

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

ACKNOWLEDGING ISRAEL'S HISTORY

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, last Wednesday, a few blocks down the street, a neo-Nazi opened fire at the Holocaust Museum. He murdered a security guard and terrorized the museum's visitors, including schoolchildren, who had come to learn, to express sympathy, and to pray. That evil act was the work of a killer who had made his hatred of other religions and ethnic groups well known. And it was a reminder that intolerance, ignorance, and anti-Semitism have not yet been defeated in our world.

This tragedy reminds us of the need of sound understanding of one of the darkest episodes in the history of the world. Far too many misrepresent the significance of the Holocaust, especially in regard to the State of Israel and her people. And far too many people deny it happened altogether, out of bigotry, hatred, and spite.

In the face of so much misunderstanding, I am compelled today to speak up about the role of the Holocaust in Israel's history and Israel's challenges in preventing anti-Semitic murder from continuing to happen.

The Holocaust was the most sinister possible reminder that the Jewish population in exile was in constant jeopardy. It was a definitive argument that anti-Semitism could appear anywhere, and its horrors galvanized international support for the State of Israel. But let us be very clear: While the Shoah has a central role in Israel's identity, it is not the reason behind its founding and it is not the main justification for its existence.

The extreme characterization of this mistaken view is the following: The Western powers established Israel in 1948 based on their own guilt, at the expense of the Arab peoples who lived there. Therefore, the current state is illegitimate and should be wiped off the face of the map. This flawed argument is not only in defiance of basic human dignity but in plain defiance of history. It is in defiance of ancient history as told in biblical texts and through archeological evidence. It ignores the history of the last several centuries. Because of what is at stake, it is well worth reviewing this history in detail, and let me make a modest attempt at a very broad overview.

There has been a continuity of Jewish presence in the Holy Land for thousands of years. Jewish kings and governments were established in that area

that is now Israel several millennia ago. After untold years of Jewish sovereignty, based in Jerusalem, the land of the Jewish people fell repeatedly to invaders—Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, and many others. Jews were repeatedly massacred and expelled, and the departure of so many from the land they had always called home developed into an unparalleled diaspora.

From the 16th century until the earliest 20th century, the land that is now Israel was under the control of a distant Ottoman caliphate based in Istanbul, and during this time, as earlier, many Jews returned to their ancestral homeland. The Ottoman Empire collapsed after World War I, and the treaty granted Great Britain a mandate over the area then known as Palestine.

The League of Nations endorsed and clarified this mandate in 1922, requiring Britain to reconstitute a Jewish national home within the territory they controlled, in accordance with the declaration made by British Foreign Secretary Balfour in 1917, making the restoration of Jewish communities in that area a matter of international law.

By the time World War II had ended, there were more than 600,000 Jews living in the British Mandate of Palestine. In 1947, the United Nations approved a plan to partition the territory into Arab and Jewish states. The Jewish Agency accepted the plan. The Arabs did not. On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel declared its independence. On May 15, five Arab nations declared war. Despite being surrounded on all sides, Israel prevailed and expanded its borders, providing a small additional measure of security against attacks which were certain to come—and did.

So to be clear, the more than 700,000 Palestinians who left Israel were refugees of a war instigated by Arab governments, bent on seizing more land for themselves. But the Arabs who left Israel after its modern founding weren't the only displaced population in the Middle East. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of Jews who left Europe during and after the Holocaust in the 20th century, more than three-quarters of a million Jews fled or were expelled from their homes in Arab and Middle Eastern nations—in cities that many of their families had lived in for nearly a millennium. Their possessions were taken, their livelihoods were destroyed, victims of nationalism and hatred of Israel.

Several thousand years of history lead to an undeniable conclusion: The reestablishment of the State of Israel in modern times is a political reality with roots going back to the time of Abraham. And so the way to consider the immeasurable impact of the Holocaust in Israel is not to ask whether the State would exist otherwise. It is, at least in one sense, to imagine how even more vibrant Israel would be if millions upon millions had not been denied a chance to know it.

The attacks on Israel have barely stopped since 1948—not just attacks by armies but attacks by individuals, attacks by tanks and terrorists, attacks that have come in the form of stones and they have come in the form of speeches. Its enemies have attempted to assassinate its people with rockets and assassinate its national character with hateful rhetoric. Today it is still surrounded by hostility; its back is still to the sea. It is surrounded by hostility from Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza strip.

In looking at the threat Israel faces on its southwestern border, one fact must be absolutely, indisputably, unequivocally clear: There is no moral equivalency between Israel and Hamas. Israel is a sovereign democratic state of 7.5 million people—Jews, Muslims, and Christians. Hamas is a terrorist organization. It won control of Gaza after men in ski masks waged gun battles with another branch of Palestinian leadership. It used that control to launch rockets at sleeping children in the nearby Israeli cities of Ashkelon and Sderot. This is the thanks Israel got for withdrawing from Gaza.

Hamas does not recognize agreements that Palestinian leaders have reached with Israel in the past, it does not recognize Israel's right to exist at all, and in fact it is ideologically committed to Israel's annihilation. Gaza's people thirst for freedom and opportunity but are held hostage to Hamas's thirst for destruction. And even today, after the consequences of menacing Israel became clear in a disastrous war, weapons are flowing freely through tunnels into Gaza, Hamas has rearmed and is readying itself for the day when it is going to take on Israel again.

Hamas and Hezbollah may be the head of the snake when it comes to terrorism, but the tail extends much further. The weapons terrorists use were sent from Iran. Money they received was sent from Iran. Propaganda supporting Hamas's campaign of terror and calling for Israel's destruction was conceived in, produced by, and broadcast from Iran.

The fundamentalist regime in Tehran isn't just an emerging threat. It doesn't just have the potential to be a threat to Israel's existence. It is a threat to Israel's existence. Under no circumstances whatsoever can we allow that conventional threat to become a nuclear one. Especially in light of the threat of Iran, and in light of the threat extremists pose to so many innocent civilians around the globe, the importance of Israel as a strategic ally and friend to the United States could not be clearer. It is hard to overstate the value of having such a stalwart democratic ally in such a critical part of the world—an ally in terms of intelligence gathering, economics, politics, and culture. Israel arose in a desert rampant with repression, a force of moderation against fundamentalism and extremism. It is an ally we can constantly depend on and count on to