

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, one thing Republicans and Democrats can all agree on is the need for serious health care reform. On Monday, President Obama spoke to the American Medical Association to discuss the issue. I applaud the President for his commitment to health care reform and agree with him that we need to make health care more affordable and accessible to all Americans.

While the American people want reform, they want us to fix what is wrong with the system without taking away the freedom, choices, and quality of care they now enjoy. During a speech to the AMA, the President acknowledged these concerns and articulated some principles on health care reform that many Republicans share. But it seems to me that many of my friends on the other side of the aisle should have listened more closely to what the President said to the AMA.

One thing the President said that Republicans agree with is that Americans should not be forced to give up the insurance they currently have and like and be forced into a government plan. The President promised the American people that:

If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor. If you like your health care plan, you will be able to keep your health care plan. No one will take it away from you no matter what.

Republicans agree with the President. Yet Democrats in Congress are making last-minute edits to a bill in the HELP Committee that the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office says will cost 10 million people with employer-sponsored insurance to lose the coverage they currently have. And that is the number of people who would lose their current insurance under just one section of the bill. This legislation is still missing significant sections that could force tens of millions of additional Americans to lose their current coverage. Republicans share the President's belief that those who like their health insurance should be able to keep it, but the bill currently being considered by the HELP Committee would force Americans off of the health care plans they now enjoy.

Another issue the President and Republicans agree on is the need to invest more in preventative care and wellness programs, which is an important way to cut costs and improve care. President Obama mentioned the successful wellness and prevention program Safeway created, which has dramatically cut the company's health care costs and employees' health care premiums. He said he would be open to doing more to help businesses across the country adopt and expand programs like the one created by Safeway. Yet the bill the Democrats are now

pushing through the Senate would actually ban this successful program from being copied and implemented by other companies.

Republicans also agree with the President on the need to reform our Nation's medical liability laws. Frivolous malpractice lawsuits are a major cause of our increasing health care costs. These lawsuits cause insurance premiums for doctors to skyrocket, and doctors then pass those higher costs on, of course, to patients.

Doctors also often order expensive and unnecessary tests just to protect themselves against these lawsuits, and some doctors just close their practices or stop offering services as a result of all these pressures.

And patients are the ones who lose out. According to a report by the Kentucky Institute of Medicine, Kentucky is nearly 2,300 doctors short of the national average—a shortage that could be reduced, in part, by reforming medical malpractice laws.

President Obama has not advocated the kind of medical liability reform most Republicans would like to see, but he has at least opened the door to fixing the system. But none of the bills introduced in the Congress even acknowledge the need for malpractice reform or propose any solutions to deal with the problem.

Finally, Republicans share the President's concerns about how much health care reform is going to cost and how we will pay for it. President Obama said that he set down a rule that "health care reform must be, and will be, deficit-neutral in the next decade."

But the preliminary estimates from the bill before the HELP Committee show that just one—just one—section of the bill spends \$1.3 trillion. And even more outrageous is the fact that the bill doesn't even have any proposals to pay for its enormous pricetag—other than to borrow it from the taxpayers. Americans want reform. But they don't want a blind rush to spend trillions of dollars that they and their grandchildren will have to pay for through higher taxes and even more debt.

When it comes to making sure Americans can keep the coverage they have, strengthening wellness and prevention programs, reforming our medical malpractice laws, and paying for health care reform, Republicans share common ground with the President. I just wish that congressional Democrats did too.

AUNG SAN SUU KYI

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi turns 64 today. Unfortunately, she will spend her birthday not in the company of family and friends but in Burma's notorious Insein Prison where 31 political prisoners have died since 1988.

Despite her apparently poor health, Suu Kyi is being housed in Insein because she is standing trial for the dubi-

ous charge of permitting a misguided American to enter her home. Sadly, Suu Kyi has already spent 13 of her last 19 birthdays under house arrest, and if convicted of these trumped-up charges by the Burmese regime, she could spend the next 5 birthdays in this foul prison.

The best gift Suu Kyi can receive for her birthday is for the regime to display some uncommon good sense and free her and other Burmese prisoners of conscience. My colleagues and I are committed to standing with her and the people of Burma for as long as it takes for that to occur.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

E-VERIFY

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I wish to share a few thoughts about the E-Verify system. That is the system businesses are voluntarily using today in large numbers provided by the U.S. Government that allows a company to check the Social Security number of an applicant for a job to make sure they are lawfully eligible for employment. This system is growing and working very well. We have had some problems, I think, with Congress, and I attempted to offer an amendment to fix some of those problems on the tourism bill that is before us but was not able to do that. So I wish to share a few thoughts about it. I have been trying to get this situation fixed for some time.

E-Verify is an online system that gives very rapid identification of an individual through the Social Security Administration and Homeland Security to determine whether they are eligible for a job. A business just checks those numbers, and if they come back as clear and they hire the individual, it provides them protection from a charge that they may have knowingly hired someone who was illegally in the country or otherwise not able to be employed.

So it is a good system. As I said, as of June 13, this month, 130,000 employers are enrolled in the program. They have, among them, 501,000 hiring sites. It is free and voluntary, and it is the best means available to determine the eligibility of those who apply.

According to the Department of Homeland Security, 96 percent of the employees are cleared automatically, and growth continues at over 1,000 new users and participants each week as more and more businesses are using it. An employer, as I said, gets protection if they use it.

In 2009, this year, 5.6 million inquiries were run. In 2008, through the whole

12 months, more than 6.6 million inquiries were run, and they continue to grow.

In Alabama alone, there are 1,000 employers who use the E-Verify system. It has been proven effective, and I think it should be made permanent and mandatory for everybody who does business with the U.S. Government. As a matter of fact, that was what the law was supposed to be in January, but it is not. So the program is to expire in September unless it is extended.

Now, I am told the Homeland Security legislation the House passed—or will pass—will extend the E-Verify Program for 2 years. I am told the Senate Homeland Security bill may well report language that will extend it for 3 years. Why we don't make it permanent is beyond me. It is a cornerstone of the enforcement system of business and employers to ensure that they are attempting to comply with the law, and if they are not, to be able to identify them.

I was extremely disappointed when the economic stimulus package was up earlier this year and passed, where we spent \$800 billion to stimulate the economy and create jobs, it was passed without any requirement that E-Verify be a part of the stimulus package. So a contractor who gets a job with the U.S. Government, with money paid from the stimulus package, legislation that was designed to create jobs for American citizens, could actually go out and hire people illegally in the country. That is not what the American people have a right to expect. That is not good policy. It should not be done.

We have surging unemployment, unfortunately. All of us hoped it would come in less than it is now. I know the President's budget, offered earlier this year, projected that unemployment would top at 8.4 percent. It is now 9.4 percent, the highest in over 20 years. It is continuing to go up, from what it appears. So we have an obligation to try to use what resources we are expending in a way that helps the American worker find work. Some of these stimulus jobs are good jobs. So the House has supported the extension of E-Verify. It passed in the House last July, 407 to 2. Yet it still hasn't become law to extend it past September.

One of the main purposes of the stimulus bill was to see that people got work. I think if we don't extend E-Verify, people have a right to question how serious we are about using that money—that huge amount—wisely to create jobs for American citizens.

An amendment offered and accepted in the House on the stimulus bill was by Congressman Jack Kingston. It said that funds made available under the stimulus package could not be made available to any business that did not use E-Verify. They apparently accepted that without a single dissenting vote. It was in the House legislation. I offered it in the Senate stimulus bill and did everything I could to see that we could make that a part of the law and

make it permanent. It was blocked in the Senate by the Democratic leadership.

I am worried that we talk a good game about doing something about this, but so far, we have been very ineffective in taking real action that will work.

Let me share one more thing about Executive order 12989. President Bush issued an Executive order, and that order called for the implementation of the E-Verify system for government contractors in January of this year. It mandates the use of E-Verify for all Federal contractors and subcontractors. It was supposed to take effect in January. I believed President Bush should have been stronger about that than he was, but they went into it carefully, and that is what they decided to do.

When President Obama came in, immediately he extended that and put it off and blocked its enforcement. So it is still not in the law. Now it is being delayed until September 8—that rule that a government contractor at least ought to check his employees to see if they are legally entitled to be employed. How simple is that? It takes a few minutes, and thousands of businesses are voluntarily doing it today. This decision, again, to delay it now until September 8 is the fourth delay this year by President Obama. I believe it signals the fact that this administration is not yet serious about their stated goal of making sure that employers comply with the law and not hire people illegally.

On January 28, it was pushed back to February 20. A few weeks later, the implementation was pushed back to May 21. Prior to that, it was pushed back to June 30, and now it is further delayed until September 8. This system is up and working. It has been up for years now. It is nothing unusual. I cannot imagine that if this Senate is allowed to vote up or down on whether to make this the law that we would not pass it. I am going to offer an amendment that will do just that. That is the right thing to do. It makes common sense.

What I am afraid may happen is that we will have, through maneuvering and chicanery, actions taken to block that vote. If the Democratic leadership in the Senate blocks a vote on this question, that can only be interpreted as their position is that we should not extend E-Verify and that we should not make it apply to government contractors.

It cannot be interpreted any other way because we have been talking about this for years. Everybody knows what the issue is.

I am concerned. I hope the President, who has had his staff on board now for 5 or 6 months—it is time for them to get their act together and let us know where they stand. Just delaying this is an indication to me they are not serious about it. It should not have taken 5 minutes to know that a government contractor should not be hiring people

illegally in the workforce. How long does it take to do that? This is not a new issue. But they are studying it, they say. OK, let's study it. But sooner or later, it is time to act.

To me, there are no two ways about it. There is one logical answer to this question. If we want to make sure the government money that is going out—money taken from American taxpayers—provides jobs for American workers, we need to pass legislation to mandate that. I hope we will. I hope the President will be able to get this study complete, which they claim they are doing, and get on with doing the right thing. We have waited long enough.

I thank the Chair, yield the floor, and I 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.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONGRATULATING THE PITTSBURGH PENGUINS ON WINNING THE 2009 STANLEY CUP CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 194, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 194) congratulating the Pittsburgh Penguins on winning the 2009 Stanley Cup Championship.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements related to the resolution be printed in the RECORD.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 194) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 194

Whereas, on June 12, 2009, the Pittsburgh Penguins defeated the Detroit Red Wings 2-to-1 in Game 7 of the National Hockey League Stanley Cup Finals;

Whereas the victory marks the Penguins' third Stanley Cup Championship in franchise history and capped off a historic playoff series;

Whereas the Penguins are just the second team in league history to win the seventh game of a Stanley Cup Championship series on the road after the home team won the first 6 games of the series;