

CONDOLENCES TO WASHINGTON METRO CRASH VICTIMS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before we turn to legislative matters, I wish to express my personal condolences and those of the Senate to the people affected by yesterday's tragedy, and that was a lot of people. That tragedy took place on the Washington Metro system. Nine people were killed and scores more injured yesterday evening as they simply made their way home during rush hour. The accident has shaken this city and this body. Like so many other commuters, many who work on Capitol Hill rely on the Metro system every day. It has been reliable, and it has been safe. My heart goes out to the families who lost loved ones and those who were injured. As we learn more about what caused this terrible accident, we will work to ensure it never happens again.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this new year began with so much hope. When we began the 111th Congress, I had hoped Republicans would leave their Republican games in the 110th Congress. I had hoped they would have listened when the American people reviewed their record and said no to the party of no.

I wrote the following at the time, this past January:

We have no choice but to govern differently. The times demand it. If we do not govern differently, we will have taken no good lessons from the bad experience of the Bush years.

That goes for Republicans and Democrats alike.

In my first address to this Chamber this year, I reminded both Republicans and Democrats that when we retreat to partisanship, when we fail to reach for common ground, we rob ourselves of the ability to create the change the American people demanded.

As the health care debate approached in April, I reached out to our Republican colleagues and wrote this:

Rather than just saying no, you must be willing to offer concrete and constructive proposals. We cannot afford more of the obstructionist tactics that have denied or delayed Congress' efforts to address so many of the critical challenges facing this nation.

Last week, I reminded the other side that our hands remain outstretched across the aisle. I assured them we still save them a seat at the negotiating table. And just yesterday, I encouraged our Republican friends to join with us to pass an important bill that would promote foreign travel to the United States—creating jobs, reducing our deficit, and strengthening our economy in the process. Everyplace in America, there are hotel rooms and motel rooms that are not occupied as they should be. The legislation killed yesterday by the Republicans would have had more people coming to those hotel and motel rooms.

At the beginning of this year, at the beginning of this Congress, at the be-

ginning of this debate, and even up to the beginning of this week, my commitment to bipartisanship and finding common ground has not changed one bit. Unfortunately, a stubborn group of Senate Republicans has not changed either.

Yesterday, Republicans blocked a bill that had 11 Republican cosponsors. I assumed when they sponsored that bill they were in favor of the bill. That is kind of an idea people get around here. They blocked a bill that would support a trillion-dollar industry in an otherwise slow economy. They blocked a bill that would create 40,000 new jobs right here at home over the next year. It would have cut our deficit by \$425 million and helped our economy recover.

Perhaps, though, we shouldn't be surprised. Just last week, a Republican Senator said the following:

Democrats need to know when they bring [bills] up, we're going to extend the debate as long as we can—even if we can't win.

That is what he said.

Given their commitment to obstruction, it is remarkable we have gotten anything done this year, let alone such a strong catalog of important accomplishments that have helped us revive our economy, strengthen our national security, protect our environment, demand accountability, promote equality, and ensure progress. But if Republicans are going to stand in the way of a bill that creates tens of thousands of new jobs, cuts our deficit by hundreds of millions of dollars, and helps every single State in the Union, how are we going to do the other important work the American people sent us here to do? What is it they want to do?

As my good friend from North Dakota, Senator DORGAN, said yesterday on the floor:

If we can't agree on a piece of legislation that was offered by over 50 Senators, Republicans and Democrats, dealing with promotion of tourism and creating jobs and promoting this country's economic interests by asking international tourists to come to America and see what America is all about—if we can't agree on that, how on Earth will we get agreements on energy, health care, climate change, and so on? It is so disappointing.

I don't know if anyone could put it any better than Senator DORGAN did. I couldn't.

Reforming health care and pursuing energy independence are daunting tasks. No one claims it is simple, but nearly everyone knows it is essential. No one claims the answer is obvious, but everyone knows we must work toward one. Yet, if Republicans refuse to find common ground on the easy things, how will we do so on the hard ones?

It is difficult to understand, but it is clear to anyone following this debate that our Republican friends are not interested in making the difficult but necessary decisions to dig our economy out of this ditch and move us further down the path of recovering prosperity. They have said publicly and privately they are waiting on President Obama's

failure. At this point, it has been a bad bet because President Obama is still—today in the press, his popularity is approaching 70 percent.

Instead, they like to echo talking points written by pollsters. They like to repeat the tired, trite, and baseless claim that if we reform health care—85 percent of Americans want us to reform health care, but they are saying that if we improve health care, they will be denied and delayed in getting health care. It is absolutely incomprehensible what their reasoning is. Nothing could be further from the truth.

First, let me state once again the facts. No matter what Republicans claim, the government has no intention of choosing any part of your medical plan. Remember, we are talking a public option, a public choice. The government has no intention of choosing for you any part of your medical plan or meddling in any of your medical relationships. If you like the coverage you have, you can keep it. In fact, it is the name of a whole section of the HELP Committee's bill. Section 131 is called "No Changes to Existing Coverage." That is what the title of the bill section is. Every time you hear Republicans say otherwise, you know they are not interested in an honest debate.

Second, let me reiterate once again the reality. The only thing being delayed is urgently needed reform that ensures all Americans have access to quality, affordable health care. The only thing at risk of being denied is Americans' ability to stay healthy, get healthy, or care for a loved one. It is being delayed by a party that has made such stalling tactics their speciality, as evidenced last night.

The party of no is showing no interest in sitting down with us at the negotiating table. The party of no has shown no interest in legislating. And I am most concerned that the party of no has shown no interest in helping the millions of people who have no insurance and the 20 million who are underinsured and the millions more who are paying too much for health care they could lose with one pink slip, one accident, or one illness. Millions of people are afraid they are going to lose their insurance. That is what this debate is about. It is not just about people who have no insurance, it is about people who have insurance, to keep it. In the last 8 years, the number of uninsured in this country has gone up by 10 million people—10 million people.

So I remind my Republican colleagues again, this is not about winning and losing. This is not the time for ideology. This is not the place for political games. For the millions of Americans who have paid crushing health care costs or those with no coverage at all, it is about a concrete and critical crisis that children, families, and small businesses feel every single day. It is about the parent who cannot afford to take their kid to the doctor because insurance is too expensive. It

is about the small businesses that have to lay off employees because they cannot afford skyrocketing health care payments. It is about small businesses that have to eliminate health insurance because they cannot afford it. It is about the three in five families who put off necessary medical care because it costs too much.

American families in every one of our States are counting on us to work together in our common interests. They are not counting the political points scored by either party. Senate Democrats want nothing more than to work with Republicans to create a bipartisan health reform bill that ensures quality and affordable help for all Americans. That is why the HELP Committee has held 14 bipartisan roundtables, 13 committee hearings, and 20 meetings of committee members to discuss various proposals—each one with the goal of reaching a bipartisan agreement. Hard-working Americans are too often casualties of our health care system. They deserve better than to also be the casualties of this kind of politics.

It is not too late for Republicans to join us for a serious discussion and sincere dialog about how to move this country forward. As I did at the beginning of this year, this Congress, this debate, and this week, I still have hope they will.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

HEALTH CARE WEEK IV, DAY II

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Secretary of Health and Human Services recently said that when it comes to health care, the status quo is unacceptable, and I agree with her. She then went on to say that there are a lot of people on Capitol Hill who are content with doing nothing, though she didn't name names. On that point, I totally disagree. Republicans and Democrats all share the belief that health care reform is needed. The question is what kind of reform it should be.

Some have proposed a government-run health care system that would force millions to give up the private health plans they have and like and replace them with a government plan where care is denied, delayed, and rationed. This so-called "reform" is not the kind of change Americans want. They want health care that is more affordable and accessible, but that preserves the doctor-patient relationship and the quality of care they now enjoy.

And that is why Republicans are proposing reforms to make health care less expensive and easier to obtain without destroying what's good about our system. Republicans want to reform our medical liability laws to discourage junk lawsuits and bring down the cost of care; we want to encourage

wellness and prevention programs that have been successful in cutting costs; we want to encourage competition in the private insurance market to make care more affordable and accessible; and we want to address the needs of small businesses without creating new taxes that kill jobs. But instead of embracing these commonsense ideas that Americans support, Democrats in Congress are trying to rush through a health care bill that will not only lead to a government-run system, but will do so by spending trillions of dollars and plunging our country deeper and deeper into debt.

Recently, the independent Congressional Budget Office told us that just one—just one—section of the bill being discussed in the HELP Committee would spend \$1.3 trillion over a decade. And Senator GREGG, the ranking member on the Budget Committee, estimates the HELP bill could end up spending more than \$2 trillion—more than \$2 trillion on a bill that would not even solve the entire problem.

The American people don't want us to spend trillions of dollars we don't have on a health care system they don't want. And yet that is exactly what Democrats plan to do, even though they can't explain to anyone how they will pay for it. Despite the staggering costs of the Democrat health care plan, we're being told we need to rush it through the Congress for the sake of the economy. When Republicans ask how Democrats are going to pay for it, or what impact it will have on our health care system and the economy, the only words we hear are rush and spend, rush and spend.

We heard similar warnings earlier this year when Democrats pushed through their stimulus bill, and voted on it less than 24 hours after all of the details were made public. Well, if the American people learned anything from the stimulus, it is that we should be suspicious when we are told that we need to spend trillions of dollars without having the proper time to review how the money will be spent or what effect it will or will not have.

Democrats also said the stimulus money wouldn't be wasted and that they would keep track of every penny spent. Yet already we are learning about outrageous projects like a \$3.4 million turtle tunnel that is 13 feet long or more than \$40,000 being spent to pay the salary of someone whose job is to apply for more stimulus money.

The administration also predicted that if we passed the stimulus, the unemployment rate wouldn't exceed 8 percent. But just last week, the President said that unemployment would likely rise to 10 percent.

So when Democrats now predict that their health care plan will cut costs, Americans should be skeptical. And they have good reason to be, since independent estimates show that every health care proposal Democrats have offered would only hurt the economy.

Americans should also be skeptical when it comes to Democrat promises

that people will be able to keep their current insurance. Just last week, the independent Congressional Budget Office said that just one section of the HELP Bill will cause 10 million people with employer-based insurance to lose the coverage they have. And that is even before we have seen a finished product. The bill is still missing significant sections, such as a government plan that Democrats want, which could force millions more to lose their current coverage.

The stimulus showed that when politicians in Washington say the sky is going to fall unless Congress approves trillions of dollars right away, we should be wary. Yet just a few months later, Americans are hearing the same thing from Democrats in the health care debate: rush and spend, rush and spend. Americans want health care reform, but they want the right health care reform. They want us to take the time and care necessary to get it right. And that is why the Democrats' rush and spend strategy is exactly the wrong approach.

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 with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and the majority controlling the next 30 minutes.

The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today, the HELP Committee will meet to discuss another new government program that seeks to promote prevention and wellness. While prevention and wellness are important and can lead to lower overall health care costs, we already have several programs focused on prevention and wellness.

The HHS Fiscal year 2010 budget request for prevention is \$700 million. In the recent omnibus approps bill there were \$22 million worth of earmarks for legislators' pet projects for prevention and wellness, and \$310.5 million worth of earmarks under the Health Resources and Services Administration. Yet the health care bill proposed by the majority includes \$80 billion new spending on new prevention programs without even acknowledging the existing programs or suggesting improvements to them. In other words, wellness and fitness has become another trough to put both feet in for earmarks and pet projects of members.