

talking about with respect to the Sotomayor nomination. The timetable on Justice Alito: almost the same from the day he was nominated by President Bush until the day we voted here in the Senate—at least a majority of our colleagues did—to confirm him. It was almost the same number of days. I realize some of our colleagues are unhappy that we are providing the same kind of timetable for Judge Sotomayor that we provided for Justice Alito and Chief Justice Roberts. I, for the life of me, do not see what the beef is.

Just as I believe we are fortunate to have someone with Dr. Groves' credentials to serve as our Census Director, I think we are lucky to have somebody with Judge Sotomayor's credentials to serve on the Supreme Court. I have had the opportunity to meet with her. I know a number of my colleagues have too. I must say, among the things I most like and respect about her: She is up from nothing. She was a kid born in the Bronx, raised in the Bronx, and very humble, from a humble setting, a humble beginning. She worked hard, won herself a scholarship to Princeton, went there, excelled, and later went off to law school at Yale—two of the finest institutions we have in our country.

After that, she was a prosecutor for a number of years; beyond that, a corporate litigator; and finally nominated by a Republican President—George Herbert Walker Bush—to serve as a district court judge. By all observers, she did a superb job. She was not just so-so. She was an exceptional judge—so good, in fact, that a few years later, when there was a vacancy on the circuit court of appeals in her district, a Democratic President, Bill Clinton, said: I think she ought to get the nod. He nominated her for that position, and she was confirmed by a wide margin. So she has actually been through this process not once but twice. I think she has gone on to serve longer as a Federal judge—when you add together the district court time and the circuit court of appeals time, I think she has served longer as a Federal judge than anybody in the last 100 years who has been nominated to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

I have read the comments some of her colleagues have to say about her, including colleagues who were also nominated by Republican Presidents. They have been uniformly complimentary, very gracious in their remarks, very laudatory as well.

So I would say to my Republican colleagues, while you struggle to get over the fact that we are going to set the same timeline or try to set the same timeline for the confirmation of Judge Sotomayor that we set for the nominations of Judges Alito and John Roberts—I just don't understand the angst you feel.

I do know this: Apparently, the nomination of Dr. Groves is being held up along with 25 to 30 other names, all of whom have cleared committees, I think, by wide margins. We can't move

forward on those nominations. Some of them maybe are not of grave consequence. The nomination of Dr. Groves is of grave consequence. If we have the opportunity later today in the course of business to actually consider a number of nominations that are before the Senate, that are awaiting our consideration, I would urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to allow the nomination of Dr. Groves to come here for a vote and to give us the opportunity to vote him up or down. I am sure we will vote him up, and I am equally sure he will make us proud with the service he will provide as the Director of the Census Bureau for our country in the years ahead.

With that having been said, I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. 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. BROWN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, just before walking into this Chamber, I attended a historic rally on health care reform across the street. Today, thousands of Americans—some from every State in this country—traveled to Washington for one of the largest health care lobby days in the history of the Nation. I joined these citizens—volunteers, almost all—representing more than a thousand organizations and more than 30 million people who are fighting to ensure that every American has access to affordable health care coverage.

I am inspired by their activism and energy and by the message I hear from these Americans. I am hearing from hundreds of thousands of middle-class Ohioans, and their message is: Don't let the special interests hijack this health insurance reform.

The message I hear is to make sure health care reform includes a strong public option. I will tell you about individuals, Americans like Joseph from Powell, OH, who are demanding they change. Joseph, an ordained pastor and doctor of psychology, wrote to me that as a child he suffered a stroke and became paralyzed and blind. His father's insurance expired and his family had no coverage. They struggled to provide the care he needed. As an adult, he is concerned that too many Americans are not receiving the medical care they need. Joseph wishes to see a public insurance option that will bring down costs and help all Americans lead a productive life.

The spirit and energy of the people I met today—thousands from around

this Nation demanding change—reaffirms why health care reform is so important.

Health care reform is about keeping what works and fixing what's broken. Middle-class families from all over the country are demanding a health care system that reduces costs, enhances quality of care, and provides choice—choice either of a private insurance plan or of a public option. It is their choice. The existence of both will make the other work better and make the quality of care for all Americans. Good old American competition.

People are reminding elected officials in the Senate and House about Americans like Ken from Findlay, OH. He lost his manufacturing job a few years ago, after working in the industry for nearly 30 years. Shortly before losing his job, Ken began having serious health issues—unexplained seizures and memory loss. In and out of the hospital, and out of a job, Ken was forced to find expensive private insurance after being denied Social Security disability and not yet old enough to be eligible for Medicare. Unfortunately for Ken, the price of the private insurance was simply too high.

After a near-death seizure a few years ago, Ken was hospitalized again and diagnosed with lupus. After a month-long hospitalization, Ken entered a nursing home for rehabilitation.

All this treatment was done without insurance. With tens of thousands of dollars in medical expenses, Ken had to withdraw from his 401(k) savings early—facing tax penalties, I might add—ultimately draining his lifetime, hard-earned savings, and putting his retirement security in jeopardy.

It is unacceptable that Ohioans such as Ken, who worked hard all their lives, have to fight for health insurance simply to take care of their disability. That is why the time for health care reform is now.

The HELP Committee has accomplished a lot on quality, on prevention and wellness, in part thanks to the contribution and efforts of the Presiding Officer from North Carolina. We have done well with the workforce shortages issue. We have good language on fraud and abuse. Clearly, most important, the most difficult work is in front of us. We have more work to do to make sure health care reform is about providing people with affordable, quality health insurance that protects them, to protect what works and to fix what is wrong.

I need some of my colleagues to explain to me something that is pretty confusing. As we talk about this public option, I hear the insurance industry tell us over and over they can do things better, that with their marketing, their skills, their bureaucracy, their well-paid executives and all the things they do they can do things better. As they argue against the public option, they say the government cannot do

anything right. What puzzles me is why the insurance industry is so afraid that the public option will put them out of business. They tell us the insurance business does things better, the government cannot do anything right, but yet they are afraid the public option will put them out of business. I don't understand.

I encourage all of the grassroots volunteers whom I met today to keep moving forward to remind your elected officials this legislation is not about helping out the insurance companies. Health care reform is about helping people such as Cheryl from Cleveland.

Cheryl is 59 years old and was recently diagnosed with diabetes. Her husband died just 4 months ago, and with no income, her insurance costs more than \$400 a month. With no income, Cheryl cares for a disabled adult son and an autistic granddaughter. She writes that she has no choices and that our system is broken and unaffordable for her, for some of her neighbors, and for too many Americans. She writes that she needs health care reform now before all her savings are lost. That is why it is so important we do this now.

President Obama is right we not wait for next year or the year after. Some people say the economy is bad; we cannot do it now. The same people said when the economy was good: We cannot do it now. As Chairman DODD repeatedly said in the committee that Senator HAGAN and I sit on, 14,000 Americans every day are losing their health insurance.

It is people such as Cheryl I talked about and Ken and Kathleen and Joseph—Kathleen, I will speak about in a minute—people who are losing their health insurance every day, 14,000 Americans every single day. For us to wait an additional 6 months or a year, or some people say let's wait until the next election until the voters, again, say we need health care reform, 14,000 people every day are losing their insurance.

Health care reform is about helping small business owners such as Kathleen from Rocky River, OH, west of Cleveland. One of Kathleen's finest employees suffers from rheumatoid arthritis. Kathleen's premiums have increased to \$1,800 a month, and after trying to purchase another plan, she was turned down because of her employee's arthritic condition.

Keep in mind, if you have a small business of 10, 20, 50 employees, and you have a decent insurance plan, if one of them gets very sick to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars, everybody's premium goes up because it is such a small insurance plan. Then so often the small business person has to give up and cannot insure their employees. Kathleen is being victimized, as are her employees, by that phenomenon. She does not want to fire her finest employee, nor should she have to.

I stand ready to work with my colleagues to design a public insurance op-

tion that will help provide middle-class families with economic stability, with stable coverage, with stable costs, with stable quality. I stand with the thousands of volunteers who were here today across the street demanding real change in our health care system. They are showing the world how change in America happens. Their activism is important—the stories of the people they are fighting for, people I just mentioned—Joseph, Ken, Cheryl, and Kathleen. That is why we cannot wait any longer. We need health care reform now, and we need a strong public option now.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 5 minutes.

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

AID TO PAKISTAN

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I want to speak on the record in support of the Kerry-Lugar legislation that was passed by this body basically without objection—by voice vote. It went through so quickly, to me it demonstrates the power of the bill, and so I want to congratulate Senator KERRY and Senator LUGAR for this piece of legislation.

To the public, what I am talking about is an aid package to Pakistan of I think it is over \$1.5 billion a year for the next 5 years. I know we need money here at home. Trust me, in South Carolina we have the third highest unemployment in the Nation. Times are tough. But all I can tell the taxpayers and the American people is that what happens overseas does matter.

September 11 was planned in Afghanistan. It was an area of the world, quite frankly, that we ignored. Pakistan has been an ally in the war on terror generally. It is a regime with nuclear weapons. It is a country that has been hit incredibly hard by the downturn of the world economy. There are millions of people in Pakistan who are looking to find a better way. The government is fighting forces that are aligned with the al-Qaida movement—the type of people who would impose a period of darkness in the Middle East that would affect the quality of our lives. So \$1.5 billion is a lot of money, but it will do a lot of good in Pakistan and it will help this government and the Pakistan military combat the growing threat of terrorism in Pakistan. The aid package is going to help the government provide a better quality of life for its people. Where the government fails to pro-

vide a decent quality of life in Afghanistan and Pakistan, you will have a vacuum that will be filled by the Taliban. The Taliban is not in favor with the Afghan people, but when the government of Afghanistan cannot deliver justice, provide the basic necessities of life, that allows the drug dealers and the Taliban to come along and fill in the vacuum.

Pakistan is a large country with nuclear weapons. It is in our national security interest to make sure that the government is stable, that the military will be supportive of civilian control of the government and will be able to defeat the forces of extremism we have seen. We know what they can do when left unchecked. So this bill is an aid package which focuses on civil capacity.

The bill also makes sure that we know where the money is going to go. It is not a \$1.5 billion check to Pakistan that could be stolen through corruption. It is a very accountable system that follows the money. It makes an effort to upgrade the Pakistan military to deal with counterinsurgency, because they do not have the capacity now that they need. Again, it provides assistance to the Pakistani people and the government to improve the quality of their lives.

I think we are getting something for our money. I think we are going to get a good return if we can stabilize Pakistan. It helps us in Afghanistan, where we have thousands of American troops stationed and fighting as I speak.

So to Senators KERRY and LUGAR, congratulations on being able to get this bill through the Senate so swiftly. To Senators McCONNELL and REID, I applaud them both, the minority and majority leaders, for working for the common good here. The administration has also been very supportive. I have had my differences with this administration, and I will continue to have them, but I want to acknowledge that Ambassador Holbrooke, who is now in charge of monitoring Pakistan and Afghanistan as a unit, has done a good job of focusing on what we need to do in both countries, because one does affect the other.

The Kerry-Lugar bill, according to the Ambassador and General Petraeus, would be the most important thing the Congress could do to aid the Pakistan Government and the Pakistan military at this crucial time. So I am glad to see that in a bipartisan fashion we responded to that call from our general and from our Ambassador, and hopefully this will become law soon.

To the American taxpayer, I know times are tough. I know money is in short supply. But quite frankly, this is an investment we have to make. We have soldiers serving in Afghanistan. If we can make Pakistan more secure and less of a safe haven for terrorists who are attacking our troops, that makes their lives better. If we can stabilize Pakistan and put it in the column of moderation and not extremism, not