

only will our Nation prosper now, but future generations will be able to prosper. It is impossible for us as a nation to have a strong, vibrant economy and to enjoy the freedom we enjoy today and pass it on to our kids and grandkids without confronting these problems head on. Anytime you ignore problems such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, they always come back to bite you.

This is a wise investment at a time that it matters. The tide is turning in Pakistan, it is turning our way, and I hope this aid package will allow it to accelerate and get a result in Pakistan that helps us in Afghanistan.

Every American should be proud of the history and tradition of our country. We have been blessed in many ways. The challenges we face are enormous, but we have to remember we are the most blessed nation on Earth and this is a chance for us not only to help ourselves but help the world at large.

I am proud of the Senate. I look forward to working in the future with Ambassador Holbrooke and the administration on Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, to find ways to make sure we are successful. This is not a Republican or Democratic problem, this is a problem for anyone who loves freedom. This is a problem that needs to be addressed and the Kerry-Lugar bill does address the problem of Pakistan in a reasoned way.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BURRIS. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. BURRIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

Mr. BURRIS. Mr. President, this June we celebrate our diversity as Americans as we mark Pride Month. In many ways, the struggle for equality is a singular thread that is woven through the fabric of American history.

From the Declaration of Independence, to the Emancipation Proclamation, to women's suffrage, from school integration, to Stonewall, the story of this Nation is a story of a long, slow march toward equal rights for every citizen. It is a story of ever greater inclusiveness—a tribute to the enduring promise of the American dream.

Together, we can reduce discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

I believe we can achieve equal rights for all. I believe our next step in this ongoing struggle must be to secure the rights of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and

transgender community. We must start by stepping up our efforts to prevent hate crimes.

It is hard to believe that it has been over a decade since Matthew Shepard was brutally beaten and left to die on a bitterly cold Wyoming road. His story rightly sparked intense national debate about the nature of hate. It reminded us that if Matthew was vulnerable, anyone could be vulnerable to such a vicious attack.

The thing that is particularly heinous about hate crimes is that they are not just an assault on an individual, they are intended as an indiscriminate assault on an entire community.

Our government has a moral obligation to say this is wrong, and we need to make sure our law enforcement officers and our courts have all of the resources they need to deliver justice.

That is why I am proud to be a co-sponsor of the bill inspired by Matthew's tragic story. I do not want to see another year go by without the Matthew Shepard Local Law Enforcement Act as the law of the land.

But we must not stop there. Far too many gay and lesbian Americans face not just violence but other forms of discrimination in their daily lives.

We are fortunate in Illinois to have laws on the books to protect our citizens from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. I believe those equal protections should be Federal law. I am also a proud cosponsor of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. It is the fair thing to do, and it is the right thing to do, and it is far overdue.

Passing ENDA will not end all forms of discrimination. One of the worst forms of discrimination is not only destroying people's careers and lives, it is undermining our national security.

I am talking about the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

To all of those who have served, and to those currently serving in our Armed Forces, let us say: Thank you—thank you to those who have served. We honor your service. We honor your sacrifices. And we honor your courage.

This Nation is a better, safer place because of them. They fight for this Nation every day. We should end this offensive and discriminatory policy so they can be the best soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines they can be, while living their lives openly and honestly.

Especially in this time of war, when we face terrorist threats, we must welcome the service of every patriotic man and woman who signs up to defend our freedom. When we dismiss the sacrifices made by those with a different sexual orientation, we determine the strength—we undermine the strength of our fighting forces.

When we fail to recognize the brave contributions that gay and lesbian servicemembers continue to make every single day, we diminish ourselves as much as we diminish their service.

Senator TED KENNEDY has long been a leader on this issue, and I know he

wants to see legislation passed to end the ban. I support his important work and I will do all I can to support those efforts.

We will see justice, and not just in the military, but also for gay and lesbian families.

Last week, President Obama took a first step toward ending the inequality of gay and lesbian families when he extended certain benefits to domestic partners of Federal employees. For the first time, same-sex partners can be included in the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program. Now any employee will be able to use sick leave to care for a same-sex partner, just as an employee can take time off to care for an opposite-sex spouse.

I applaud the President for beginning to tear down these inequities, but while this Executive order represents an important initial step, there is so much more to be done. The U.S. Government is far behind the private sector on this front. A large number of Fortune 500 companies already offer comprehensive benefits to same-sex couples. They have done so for many years, sometimes for over a decade. This allows them to compete for the best and brightest, attracting talented professionals regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We need to make sure the Federal Government is able to compete for the same talented people.

I am proud to support a bill that would extend additional benefits to the domestic partners of Federal workers. This legislation, introduced by my friend Chairman LIEBERMAN and Ranking Member COLLINS, will extend the full range of benefits to these couples. This includes access to the same Federal health and retirement plan currently available to the recognized spouses of government workers. As the free market has shown, extending these benefits to same-sex partners is not only the right thing to do, it also makes good business sense.

I know that this week, the many Pride events around the country mean a lot of different things for people in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community. For some, it is a chance to reflect on the progress and accomplishments made by this community and to organize for the future. For others, it is an opportunity to reflect and to honor those who have been lost to AIDS. And still for others, it is a chance to feel safer, to feel empowered to celebrate a part of something bigger than themselves, and to be reminded that everyone should be proud of who they are. However each of us celebrates Gay and Lesbian Pride Month, we must remember that gender equality is far from over. But just as the Emancipation Proclamation set this country on the path to racial equality, just as women's suffrage paved the way for gender equality, so that singular refrain throughout our history will be taken up again. The struggle for equality will not be easy,

and it never has been, but if we keep at it, we will get there.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, might I inquire what the status is?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are on the executive nomination of Harold Koh.

Mr. ENZI. Are there time restrictions?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in postclosure, which requires debate on the pending matter.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business for such time as I might consume.

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

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need to reform our Nation's health care system. If we are to be successful, we must undertake this effort with the greatest care and deliberation.

When it comes to health care reform, we have started down this road before. Last Congress, I proposed legislation called Ten Steps to Transform Health Care in America in an effort to provide a blueprint from which we could begin to address the challenge of improving our health care system.

I might mention the way that came about is that Senator KENNEDY as the chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, and I as the ranking member, worked together on a number of bills. In fact, I have quite a record for being able to work in a bipartisan way to get bills completed. We were very busy on the Higher Education Act and other education issues, so I took some leadership in the health area, and we talked about principles we wanted to achieve. Then I collected ideas from both sides of the aisle and put together this package of 10 steps that will transform health care in America as a blueprint to improve and address this challenge of improving our health care system. So it isn't something on which he or I just started working.

After I introduced the bill, I took my message of health care reform directly to the people in my State. I traveled 1,200 miles and held a series of events in March of last year to provide the people of Wyoming with the chance to see what I was working on and to voice their concerns with our current system. Everywhere I went, I heard the same message repeated over and over, and that was that people want change. They want a system that will provide them with a health care system that is affordable, more available, and easier for them to access. Simply put, the people of Wyoming, as do people all across the country, want more choices and more control over their health care. That was the goal of my Ten Steps bill. It was drafted with the aim of leveling the playing field in tax

treatment of health insurance. It was also intended to provide a helping hand to low-income Americans in the form of subsidies that would ensure access to quality, affordable health insurance.

As I traveled through the State, I also heard from members of the small business community. They made it clear that they wanted greater equity and access to a plan that would allow cross-State pooling so they could band together with small business owners in other States and get better rates on the health insurance they provide to their employees.

In the end, no matter whom I spoke with, they all had one message they wanted me to bring to the Senate: Keep costs down and under control. There have to be limits. That is why, as the only accountant in the Senate and as a member of the Budget Committee, I was and remain very concerned with the effect any health care reform proposal will have on our Federal budget, both in the short and the long term.

I can't be the only one who heard those things when I was back home. I think my experience on the road was very similar to that of almost every one of my colleagues. Last year, whether they were campaigning for themselves or for other members of our party, we logged on a lot of travel miles. We met with and spoke to people from all walks of life who came from every imaginable background. Some were from large cities and towns with large populations and others came from the smaller cities and some very small towns with fewer people and resources. Whomever we spoke to and wherever we were, we all heard the same concerns: We need a better health care system, and we need it now.

In response, I was pleased to join with several of my colleagues as we continued to work on health care reform this year. As the ranking member on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and in my service on the Senate Finance Committee, I have been working to foster and facilitate a constructive dialog with my colleagues on both committees. I have also met with the President and administration officials on numerous occasions so we could share ideas on how to best craft a strong, bipartisan bill. As the debate on health care reform proceeds, I continue to stand ready to work on this critical issue.

This is likely to be the most important legislation we will ever work on as Members of the Senate, no matter how many terms we serve. How well we handle this crucial issue will have an impact not just today but for many tomorrows and countless years to come. If we fail to provide the change that is needed, it may be a long time before the Senate will ever try to do this again.

I am convinced we have a perfect storm before us as we face this issue. The time is right, the political winds are with us, and we have the support

and encouragement of the current administration and the people of this Nation to get something done. That is why a good bill and a bipartisan effort are well within our grasp.

If we are to do the work that is before us and do it well, however, we can't have one side or the other try to grab the reins and lead the effort exclusively in their direction. The American people are looking for us to solve the problem, and they want to know we wrote this bill together, amended it together, and, most importantly, finished it together. They know no one side has all the answers, so they do expect us to put partisanship aside. This is too important an issue not to follow a path that will produce a bill that will have the support of 75 or 80 Members of the Senate. I have every belief we can do that, and that is why I am so strongly committed to bringing massive change to the policies laid out in the recently filed Kennedy bill. I will continue to try to bring that change to the work being done by the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and in the Finance Committee.

Let me be very clear about what I believe we can do if we put partisanship aside and work together. We can draft a good bipartisan bill, one that will draw a large majority to its side, and we can get it done this year.

Last week, the HELP Committee began to mark up a very flawed piece of legislation. I understand the difficult circumstances that brought Senator DODD to chair this extraordinarily complex bill, and I appreciate Senator DODD's willingness to take on the task, as he also chairs the Banking Committee. However, the legislation we are considering in the HELP Committee is broken, almost to the point of being beyond repair. It is too costly and it is incomplete. Of course, we are promised we will get the other pieces of the bill. Arguments made about the unfairness of estimating the cost of an incomplete bill show that in the race to revamp our health care system, this bill was a false start. In order to get this right, we should slow down, and in some areas we need to start over.

This shouldn't be a matter of speed. To stay with the analogy of health care, no one goes to a doctor or a surgeon based on how fast they can operate or conduct an examination. It never matters how long it takes. All that matters is that they get it right. We should do the same.

I am not suggesting that we come up with a new process to develop this legislation. All I am saying is that we need to make better use of the one we already have in place, the way we have always done things in the Senate when we want to make sure we get it done right.

For instance, it wasn't all that long ago that we had to do something about our Nation's pension system. We worked together. We talked about what we had to do together. Then we came up with a way to get there, together.