

find these speeches or ask whether there are other records—for example, transcripts, tape or video recordings, press accounts, and so on—that would indicate whether her April 28 speech is indicative of her approach to judging.

As we begin to consider the nomination of Judge Sotomayor, we will need this information to properly evaluate her qualifications, especially as it relates to her view that using foreign or international law is an appropriate way for U.S. Supreme Court Justices to interpret the U.S. Constitution.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I ask unanimous consent to speak for 15 minutes.

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

BURMESE PYTHONS

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, tragedy has struck. It is not like we haven't been warned. With the proliferation of the Burmese python being brought into the United States, these pythons people buy as pets, and then they get so big that the people don't want them around the house anymore and they release them. Of course, in south Florida they are releasing them into a natural habitat which is the Florida Everglades, so much so that the superintendent of the Everglades National Park has now estimated that they have proliferated to the tune of 150,000 to 180,000 of these Burmese pythons.

When Secretary Salazar came down a month ago for us to take him into the Everglades so he could see that extraordinary feature of Mother Nature, the river of grass, we took him in an airboat out across this river of grass. We also wanted to show him what is lurking beneath that grass now. We took him to two captured Burmese pythons. One was about an 8 footer and another one was a 16 footer. A 16-foot Burmese python in his midsection is that much in diameter. It took three grown men to hold that python. The oldest registered Burmese python in captivity has grown to 27 feet. Indeed, an 18 footer was captured and killed in the Everglades, and it was a female. They found inside of her 56 eggs that were ready to hatch. That is why we have a proliferation.

We have spent a lot of money, along with the State of Florida, to restore the Everglades, one of the great natural wonders of the world. Mankind, over the course of three quarters of a century, has diked and drained the Everglades, and we are trying to restore them now. But here we have an invasive species that has been introduced that is upsetting the entire ecological balance. Already we have found, for example, somehow a Burmese python swam across the ocean to Key Largo in the upper Florida Keys. They found inside this Burmese python the endangered Key Largo wood rat. They

have found a full size bobcat. They have found a full size deer. Indeed, the Burmese python is at the top of the food chain. These pythons, in fact, get into fights with alligators, and they found inside one of the Burmese pythons a 6-foot alligator.

I want to show what I am talking about. I want colleagues to see this critter. This is only a 6 footer. This Burmese python is 2 feet shorter than the Burmese python 4 days ago that, after it had escaped from its glass container at midnight, the man of the house found missing. He went and got the Burmese python, put it back in the container and, unfortunately, did not secure the top of the container, put, if we can believe it, a quilt over the top and secured down the edges of the quilt. Guess what an 8-foot Burmese python can do coming out of a glass container? Tragedy struck, because that python slithered throughout the house and up into a baby crib where there was a 2-year-old little girl named Shaiunna Hare. That Burmese python attached its fangs to the forehead of that child and then did what they do, wrapped its body around the body of the little child and proceeded with all of that muscle to strangle the child to death. This is what we have been saying was going to happen. This happened with a domestic pet in a home. This is what is capable of happening with 180,000 of these pythons in the Florida National Everglades Park.

Sooner or later, a Burmese python will get the endangered Florida panther. Sooner or later, for an unsuspecting tourist in the Everglades National Park, there will be an encounter with a human. Tragically, it took this event of the strangulation by one of these snakes of a child within her own home in the child's crib to bring this to our attention.

This Wednesday there will be a hearing in the committee chaired by Senator BOXER. I will be testifying. I will bring further evidence than these photographs. Here are wildlife officers encountering a snake with an attachment that grabs the snake from right behind the head. In this case, it is probably a 6½ footer—relatively small. But we can see the size. This is solid muscle. That is why these constrictor snakes have the capability of asphyxiating their prey before they then consume their prey. We have heard the old adage, a pig in a python. That is exactly what it is. Once they asphyxiate their prey, then their jaws are capable of totally opening and they ingest the entire victim into their body. There is the old phrase: a pig in a python with the hump. That is exactly what it is.

That is the alligator that was found, the 6-foot alligator, within the stomach of the snake. That is the same thing.

There is something we can do about this. No. 1, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has the capability under law now to declare this an injurious species. Since they have been studying

this for the last 2½ years and have still not acted, although I believe that Secretary of the Interior Salazar is getting them off dead center and is going to get them to start moving, there is something else we can do. We can change the law. We can stop the importation by changing this from being a species that is allowed to be imported into one that is injurious. That change of definition in the law would stop the importation of these snakes into this country and would stop the exporting of these snakes from one State across State lines to another.

The State of Florida has a registration fee. They now require the implantation of a chip so that if the snake gets loose, we will have a chance of chasing it down. Nevertheless, when we have 150,000 to 180,000 of these snakes in the Everglades National Park alone, we can see that the ecological balance of Mother Nature is definitely being upset. We must change it. We must do it quickly.

Therefore, in front of the Boxer committee will be the legislation I have offered with a number of other Senators, trying to put a halt to the things that led to this tragedy of this little girl being strangled to death by a Burmese python.

I yield the floor and 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. MCCONNELL. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, over the past several weeks, Americans have heard a number of proposals for reforming health care, and they are increasingly concerned about many of the details. Americans want reform, but they want the right reform, not a reform that ends up costing them much more for worse care than they already receive. Unfortunately, the government-run plan that some are proposing would do just that.

A government-run plan would force millions of Americans to give up the care they currently have and replace it with a system in which care is denied, delayed, and rationed. Instead of increasing access and quality, it could limit access and options. It could lead us into deeper debt. And millions could well remain uninsured.

Americans are skeptical about all of this. They do not want to be forced to

change the coverage they have for a government system they do not particularly want. Some of the advocates of a government plan are beginning to sense this growing public opposition to their proposal. But rather than make their case on the merits, they are basing their arguments on the urgency of the moment.

We keep hearing that time is running out, that the clock on reform is about to expire, that the entire health care system and the whole economy will soon collapse without this particular reform. Well, we have been down this road before.

Earlier this year, we heard the same dire warnings about the stimulus. If Congress did not pass the stimulus, we were told, unemployment would continue to rise and the economy would continue to falter. We did not just have to pass it, we had to pass it right away. The results are now coming in: higher unemployment, soaring job losses, higher debt, huge deficits, and growing fears about inflation.

Many of us saw this coming. That is why we proposed an alternative stimulus that would not add a trillion dollars to the debt and would have gotten to the root cause of our economic problem, which is housing. That is why in the debate over health care Republicans are proposing reforms that would make health care more accessible and less expensive without destroying what people like about our health care system and without sending the Nation deeper and deeper into debt.

Every cost estimate we have heard about the administration's plans for health care is astronomical. The administration realizes this is a problem, and yet they have no good plan for covering the cost. Some of the ideas that have been floated are a series of taxes, including a tax on soft drinks. But even that would not come close to covering the cost. So they have been looking frantically for money, and the target they seem to have landed on is Medicare—the government health plan for the elderly.

Last month, the administration proposed hundreds of billions of dollars in cuts. It said by taking this money out of Medicare and putting it into a new government-run plan for all Americans, we could help pay for health care reform. Not only is this aimed at concealing the cost of the new government plan, it is also a reckless misuse of funds that should be used to stabilize Medicare instead.

Weeks before the administration proposed its cuts to Medicare, the government board that oversees this vital program issued an urgent report on its looming insolvency. Let me say that again. Just weeks before the administration recommended Medicare cuts in order to pay for a new program, the government board that oversees this program issued an urgent report on its looming insolvency. Already, Medicare is spending more money than it is tak-

ing in. It runs out of money altogether in 8 years. And over the coming decades, Medicare is already committed to spend nearly \$40 trillion that it does not have.

If there were ever a crisis that cannot wait another day for reform, it is Medicare. Yet rather than do the hard but necessary work to put this program on a sound financial basis, the administration wants to take money away from it and use it to create an entirely new government-run system that would presumably have the same fiscal problems down the road that Medicare has today. This makes no sense whatsoever.

Savings from Medicare should be put back into Medicare—not a government plan that could drive millions of Americans out of the private health care plans they have and like and lead to the same kind of denial, delay, and rationing of health care that we have seen in other countries.

We must be committed to reform but not a so-called reform that raids one insolvent government-run health care program in order to create another insolvent government-run health care program. The administration should be applauded for trying to fix what is wrong with our Nation's health care system, but it needs to slow down and take a deep breath before taking over what amounts to about one-sixth of our Nation's economy with a single piece of legislation that lacks bipartisan support.

The administration rushed ahead with a poorly conceived stimulus plan that added a trillion dollars to the national debt and has not stopped half a million Americans a month from losing their jobs. It should learn from that and not rush a poorly conceived health care plan with money we do not have. We do not need more rush-and-spend policymaking. We need to reform health care, but we do not need to weaken Medicare to do it. We can reform both, but we should start with Medicare.

At a time when Americans are increasingly concerned about the future of health care and also about a political system in which they see fewer and fewer checks on the party in power, now would be the ideal time to advance a truly bipartisan reform. The President has repeatedly expressed openness to reforming Medicare in the past. We stand ready to work with him to strengthen and preserve Medicare if he chooses to follow through on those assurances.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I congratulate the Republican leader on his remarks. I remember Senator McCONNELL's first address following President Obama's election at the National Press Club. It was to the President, saying: Mr. President, we look forward to working with you, and the pressing issue is the entitlements fac-

ing this country, the automatic spending that means more and more and more debt.

I would ask the Republican leader whether there has been any response from the administration to him about the opportunity to work together across party lines to deal with Social Security which, as I remember in January, was your proposal?

Mr. McCONNELL. I say to my good friend from Tennessee, unfortunately, there has been no followup whatsoever. There seemed to be, on the part of the President and the President's Chief of Staff at the beginning of the administration, a willingness to support the Conrad-Gregg proposal, which would have given us a way to get a handle on at least Social Security—they did not seem to want to deal with Medicare, and I think we now know why—at least Social Security, with an expedited procedure and an up-or-down vote guaranteeing a result. But I would say to my friend from Tennessee, there has been no word on that lately.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, in my visits in Tennessee this past week, if I heard two things, one was too many Washington takeovers; the other was too much debt. I found in people—and I hesitate to use the word—a great deal of fear about the amount of debt we are piling up here in Washington.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I think there is a genuine alarm. Americans see the government now running banks, insurance companies, automobile companies. The Senator from Tennessee points out student loans. Now they fear the government wants to take over health care as well. I think there is a growing suspicion that this is exactly the wrong way to go.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for his comment about checks and balances. There is something innate in the American character about checks and balances. Alexis de Tocqueville warned, in the early 1800s, about the tyranny of a majority. We like to see results, but we do not want to see one party or one faction run away with policy. We seem to know it is better if there is a check and a balance. And the genius of the American system is we have many checks and balances.

I wonder, Mr. President, how much time do I have remaining?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has 8 minutes remaining.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I thank the Acting President pro tempore.

NUCLEAR POWER

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, health care is not the only issue before the Senate. We have the nomination by the President of a distinguished jurist, Judge Sotomayor. Hearings will begin next week on whether she should be confirmed for the Supreme Court.

Tomorrow, the Senate, in the Environment and Public Works Committee,