

America. This includes working to protect small businesses from higher marginal tax rates, an increase in capital gains and dividend tax rates and an increase in the unfair estate tax rate that will penalize the success of small businesses.

In fact, I have recently introduced S. 1381, the Small Business Tax Relief Act of 2009, to lower taxes on these job-creating small businesses. My bill contains a number of provisions that will leave more money in the hands of these small businesses so these businesses can hire more workers, continue to pay the salary of their current employees, and make additional investments in these businesses. The National Federation of Business has written a letter supporting my bill.

Quoting from the letter:

To get the small business economy moving again, small business needs the tools and incentives to expand and grow their business. S. 1381 provides the kind of tools and incentives that small businesses need.

We all want to see the job numbers from the Department of Labor moving in positive directions. We all want to see the unemployment rate plummet. I firmly believe the best way for us to do that is to prime the job-creating engine of our economy by focusing on small businesses. My small business bill, if enacted, will lead to new jobs. This is in the right direction. The House health care reform bill, with the 5.4-percent tax increase, is taking us in the wrong direction. These will be real, countable, verifiable jobs that will be created.

In contrast, President Obama has proposed tax increases that will cause small business jobs to be lost. The newest tax hike proposed is the small business surtax. As with other tax hikes on small business, I oppose the small business surtax. I urge my colleagues on both aisles to do the same.

I ask unanimous consent to print in the RECORD the NFIB letter from which I quoted.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF
INDEPENDENT BUSINESS,
Washington, DC, July 10, 2009.

Senator CHARLES GRASSLEY,
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Finance, Washington, DC.

DEAR RANKING MEMBER GRASSLEY: On behalf of the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), the nation's leading small business advocacy organization, I am writing to thank you for introducing S. 1381, the Small Business Tax Relief Act of 2009.

Small business is the source of economic growth and job creation, but the NFIB Small Business Economic Trends (SBET) survey has been near historic lows since September, with plans to hire and make capital expenditures showing little sign of improvement. To get the small business economy moving again, small businesses need the tools and incentives to expand and grow their businesses.

S. 1381 provides the kinds of tools and incentives that small businesses need. Specifically, increasing and making permanent sec-

tion 179 expensing will provide small businesses with the incentives and certainty to make new investments in their business. Providing a 20 percent deduction for smaller flow-through businesses and reducing the tax rate on smaller C corps will allow all small businesses to keep more of their income to invest back into the business. Finally, providing full deductibility of health insurance for the self employed provides tax equity, lowers the cost of health insurance, and improves an important deduction for these business owners.

These and other provisions in the bill will reduce the tax burden on small businesses. This is especially important in the current economic environment with many small businesses struggling to find access to credit. Allowing business owners to keep more of the money they earn provides an immediate source of capital that will be invested back into the business.

Thank you again for your continued efforts to support small business owners and to reduce their tax burden. I look forward to working with you to see that this bill becomes law.

Sincerely,

SUSAN ECKERLY,
Senior Vice President, Public Policy.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I yield the floor.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session and that the Commerce Committee be discharged en bloc from further consideration of PN638 and PN639 and that the Senate proceed en bloc to their consideration; that the nominations be confirmed and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table en bloc; that no further motions be in order; that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed are as follows:

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE
ADMINISTRATION

Charles F. Bolden, Jr., of Texas, to be Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Lori Garver, of Virginia, to be Deputy Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, by this action, it concludes a very happy chapter for what I think will be the future of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. PN638 is Presidential No. 638, and that is the nomination of GEN Charles F. Bolden to be the NASA Administrator, whom we have just confirmed, and PN639 is Presidential No. 639, which is the nomination of Lori Garver to be Deputy Administrator for NASA which we have just confirmed. My congratulations to the two of them.

I will make one personal comment. General Bolden is someone who has known adversity but has always been an overcomer.

This was certainly true in South Carolina, in 1964, when, as an African American, he could not get an appointment from his congressional delegation to Annapolis. The Defense Department found Charlie and arranged for a Chicago Congressman to nominate him. When Charlie arrived as a freshman at Annapolis, he was promptly elected president of the freshman class. So you can see the progression of being an overcomer.

Upon graduation from Annapolis, choosing the Marines, choosing to fly, becoming a marine test pilot, applying to the astronaut office, becoming an astronaut, flying twice as shuttle pilot and twice as commander—four times—returning to active duty in the Marine Corps, and rising to the level of major general, after having commanded several Marine wings; and now the dream is fulfilled that Charlie has now been confirmed as head of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

I think it is interesting that at 6:03 this evening the space shuttle lifted off into a successful mission. This space shuttle holds the second record for the most delays—six. It is exceeded by the first space flight that General Bolden took, of which I had the privilege of being a member of that crew in January of 1986. We were delayed seven times—scrubbed four times on the pad before launching on the fifth try into an almost flawless 6-day mission.

General Bolden takes over NASA at a critical time. NASA is in drift. It needs a leader. But also for General Bolden to be successful as the leader of NASA, he has to have the backing of the President of the United States, who is the one who can give the ultimate leadership to our Nation's space program.

So it was such a privilege for me, Mr. President, to come and propound this unanimous consent request and to see the Senate confirm, by your order, unanimously, the nominations of the Administrator and the Deputy Administrator of NASA. Needless to say, there are a lot of smiles that are going to be across America as a result of this action.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I am in support of President Obama's nomination of Charles Bolden as the next Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA, and Lori Garver as the Deputy Administrator of NASA.

We are at a critical point in NASA's history, and our space agency needs a leadership team devoted to the core mission of the agency.

Mr. Bolden has a compelling story. He transcended barriers and established himself at the forefront of our Nation's scientific policy. A career marine and true leader, Mr. Bolden is deeply committed to fostering a balanced space program focused on safe,

reliable human space exploration, and robust scientific research and innovation. A seasoned astronaut, Mr. Bolden has experienced first hand the significance of space exploration, traveling into orbit four times between 1986 and 1994, including a mission to deploy the Hubble space telescope.

From commanding missions in space to serving our Nation in the U.S. Marine Corps, Mr. Bolden has displayed the experience, leadership skills, and know-how to successfully guide NASA into the future.

In addition, Lori Garver is a leader in the aerospace industry and has displayed tremendous management ability and intellect. Her knowledge of our space program will be key to NASA's leadership team.

Again, I fully support the nomination of Charles Bolden and Lori Garver as the next Administrator and Deputy Administrator of NASA.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

AFFORDABLE HEALTH CHOICES ACT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, today, I proudly cast my vote to pass out of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee landmark legislation that will fundamentally change the direction of our dysfunctional health care system.

The committee approval of the Affordable Health Choices Act is truly a tremendous victory for millions of Americans who struggle with a system that has continually failed to provide quality, affordable health care options for them, their families, their loved ones, and their businesses.

It has been a special privilege to temporarily serve on the HELP Committee, in particular, with my distinguished senior Senator, JACK REED. I do not think there is a formal rule against it, but it is a rarity in the Senate for two Members from the same State of the same party to serve on the same committee. My brief tenure on the HELP Committee gave me the chance to witness firsthand the resolve and caring leadership that is JACK REED's hallmark and that was shown throughout this historic debate.

I also applaud the unwavering commitment and leadership of President Obama, and the tireless efforts of my Senate colleagues, in the pursuit of meaningful, comprehensive reform.

I feel really very privileged to have served with Chairman DODD and Ranking Member ENZI. Chairman DODD had this responsibility fall upon him when illness overtook probably his best friend in the Senate, Chairman KENNEDY. And he gave me, at least, as a junior Senator, an education in Senate chairmanship.

Ranking Member ENZI presented an unforgettable model of graciousness and civility. And all of the members of the committee worked hard and sincerely.

I particularly thank our esteemed chairman, Senator KENNEDY, for his longstanding leadership and dedication. He truly is the champion of health care reform. For decades, Chairman KENNEDY has worked passionately on this important cause. And while he could not attend the markup, we felt his presence daily in the hearing room. And it is to his very great credit that we had this success today.

I am pleased that the final legislation reflects the principles outlined by President Obama, who called for a new system to control skyrocketing health costs, expand coverage to the tens of millions left uninsured in our country, and ensure high quality, affordable health care for every American family.

The bill also focuses on the priorities of Americans, from all corners of our country, whose powerful and often heart-wrenching stories underscore the urgent need for reform.

Behind all the statistics and all the numbers and all the projections and all the demographics, as we all know in this Chamber, are a legion of personal and family tragedies and sorrows and frustrations that we have to address.

The Affordable Health Choices Act invests heavily in the delivery system reforms that will drive down costs and bring our current outmoded, broken system into the 21st century. These changes are long past due and are essential if we are to protect our ship of state from the tidal wave of health care costs now bearing down on us.

This legislation also upholds President Obama's promise: If you like the health care you have, you can keep it. But for the many Americans who want different choices or who do not have health insurance at all, we also offer a new public health insurance option that can and must compete in an open market with private insurance.

As I have traveled throughout Rhode Island, at community dinners and senior centers, at coffees and on our main streets, I have heard stories of frustration and heartache at our broken health care system. Earlier this year, I launched a health care storyboard on my Web site where Rhode Islanders can share their experiences and ideas for health reform. In just a few short months, hundreds of Rhode Islanders have written to share their ideas and experiences. These are just a few of them.

Paul and Marcela from Newport told me about the health complications that Paul and his son have endured from type 1 diabetes. The related medical conditions Paul has suffered from the diabetes have left him unable to work.

To compensate for the family's loss of income, Marcela works tirelessly, taking on a full-time and part-time job to pay the bills. Like so many hard-working Americans, they fall just short of income eligibility cutoffs for State assistance programs, forcing them to bear the brunt of expensive medical cos, premiums, and prescrip-

tion costs. On a stretched budget, balancing their medical expenses is a constant challenge, and Paul and Marcela keep hoping they will catch a break soon.

I heard from Ben, a medical student in Providence, who, even at such an early stage in his medical career, has witnessed the devastating effect of being uninsured on the health and well-being of his patients.

Ben shared the story of one of his patients who delayed treatment because he was unable to afford the medical bills. Only a few days later, this patient was rushed to the emergency room with a life-threatening infection.

The treatment to save this man's life resulted in much higher costs for the patient and the hospital—costs that Ben knows may have easily been prevented if the patient was treated when the condition was in its early stages. Ben writes:

It's these day-to-day decisions to postpone treatment that really hurt the uninsured.

Mike from Riverside shared his experience of surviving cancer that was misdiagnosed and left untreated for several years. When he sought a second opinion, the final diagnosis was delayed for weeks as his paper medical records were shuttled from hospital to hospital.

On top of this frustration, Mike received the devastating news that his leg had to be removed to prevent the cancer from spreading further. After his amputation surgery, Mike is thankful to be cancer free, but now his financial struggles have begun. With medical bills and health care premiums that exceed his monthly mortgage payments, Mike is wondering how he will make ends meet.

I had coffee with Shirley, a Middletown resident who described her relief at turning 65. For the past 20 years, she and her husband did not have insurance. As self-employed business owners in their fifties, finding affordable insurance options was impossible, so they went without. They took their chances.

Now 65 and eligible for Medicare, they finally have peace of mind. Shirley admits she and her husband were lucky to make it through those 20 years without serious health problems. During our meeting, she urged us to pass health care reform for the millions of hard-working Americans—hard-working, middle-class Americans—who are not as fortunate as she and her husband.

For these Rhode Islanders—and for millions more Americans all over the country—there has to be a better way. We have to do better than 47 million uninsured and millions more teetering on the brink. We have to do better than 100,000 people dying each year from avoidable medical errors. We have to do better than health care outcomes for Americans who are at the bottom of all our industrialized competitors. America can do better than this. With this legislation, we believe the process