This is one from India. ''One special reason to visit India in 2009,'' it says. ''Any time is a good time to visit the Land of Taj, but there is no time like now.''

This is one of the many from Australia. I think all of us have seen ads about Australia. ''Arrived with a thousand things on our minds; departed without a care in the world.'' Another from Australia which obviously features the great diving they have. Just the visual image makes you say: I think I would like to go there. I think I would like to experience that on my next vacation.

This is Ireland, a nice simple map of Ireland talking about all the various things they have, from golf and the St. Patrick's center to other places to visit in Ireland. It gives a nice visual image.

Well, there are not only brochures but television advertising, the Internet, and all kinds of ways to get into a person's mind about why they would want to come and visit someplace, and all we are saying is we need to do this for the United States. There are so many incredible places we have here to visit that selling is not going to be the problem, it is just going to be making the effort.

So, Mr. President, I believe this is legislation that is worth doing. Some folks have come down here to say we don't need to do this because we already have a lot of travelers coming to the United States as it is. International travel to the United States, they say, is up. Well, the problem is, when you measure international travel coming from Mexico and Canada, that may be up, but they only spend about $900 each visit when they come here. Overseas travelers spend about $4,500 each visit when they come here, and that travel is down in the United States. It is down significantly compared to the rest of the world. So this is legislation that we need to go after those overseas travelers who have money to spend. This is something that can benefit States all across America. It will benefit the Federal Treasury, and it will create jobs.

There are a lot of good things about this legislation, and I think that is why you will see a good, strong bipartisan vote when the final vote tally is taken about 4:30 today.

So I would encourage people to take a good, hard look at this. At a time when we need jobs—jobs, jobs, jobs—this is a bill that can help deliver some of those jobs.

RECESS

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we recess until 2:15 p.m. as under the previous order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:24 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CARDIN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

TRAVEL PROMOTIONS ACT OF 2009—Continued

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, we are going through a travel and tourism bill. I know my leader is coming to say some words on the Senate floor, but I had a couple questions the authors of the bill have not answered satisfactorily. One is they create a new corporation for travel promotion and they create a new travel and advisory board, but there is already a travel and advisory board within the Commerce Department. There is nothing in this bill that eliminates this duplicative function that is already there. If, in fact, the intent of the bill is to promote, as they say it is, travel and tourism, one of the things we do not want to do is have duplicative agencies doing exactly the same thing, wasting the taxpayers' money. It is about $67 million that will go down the drain if, in fact, we do not eliminate the duplicative section of this bill.

The second point I would make is you are going to spend $12 million a year just on this one advisory board. The third point I will make refers to a letter from the European Union noticing that the visa fees we plan on placing with this bill will cause a negative reaction from them and a reciprocal institution of visa fees through the European Union.

I make those points and hope the authors of the bill will answer, for the American people, the $67 million waste in this bill that is going to occur if they do not eliminate programs that are already out there for which they are creating duplicate agencies.

I yield the floor and ask unanimous consent to have the letter printed in the RECORD.

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

JUNE 18, 2009.

Hon. HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON,
Secretary of State, Department of State, Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SECRETARY, As you are most certainly aware, the U.S. Travel Promotion Act is currently under consideration in Congress (S.1023). On 16 June 2009, the Senate voted 90:3 for the bill to proceed and a final vote is expected any day now. If this bill were to enter into force, DHS would be required to ask travellers to the U.S. upon their application for an Electronic (System for) Travel Authorization (ESTA) to pay at least $10 which would be used to finance a Travel Promotion Fund as well as the operational costs of ESTA.

We are concerned that this draft legislation is not compatible with our common goal to facilitate transatlantic trade and travel. We believe it would constitute a step backwards in our joint endeavour to ease transatlantic mobility. This fee is likely to discourage the use of ESTA well in advance of travel, thereby undermining the security objectives of the system. Moreover, it risks being perceived as a visa fee in disguise and would lead to calls for the European Commission to re-examine the issue of whether the ESTA is tantamount to a visa or not, with potentially negative implications on reciprocal visa-free travel between the EU and the U.S. Besides, taxing foreign travellers to promote tourism seems peculiar and public perceptions might lead to less, not more travel to the U.S.

We understand that the Administration also has concerns with this bill. We would therefore urge you to make your formal position known to Congress, so as to avoid the passing of legislation which may unnecessarily deter legitimate transatlantic travel for business and tourism.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to further strengthening transatlantic relations in the years to come.

Sincerely,

PETR KOLÁŘ,
Ambassador, Czech Republic.
JOHN BRUTON,
Ambassador, European Commission.
PONTUS F JÄRBORG,
Chargé d'Affaires a.i., Sweden.

Mr. COBURN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator withhold his suggestion?

Mr. COBURN. I will.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as we all know, the President will be here tonight, and he will get a warm reception, as Presidents always do when they address the Nation from the Capitol. It is a short trip from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, but it is always meaningful whenever a President from either political party speaks to a joint session. So we welcome him.

He picked a good topic. Americans are extremely skeptical about the health care proposals the administration and Democrats in Congress have been talking about over the past several months. And they are understandably baffled by some of the arguments that have been used to promote them.

Americans don't understand how a massive expansion of government will lower costs, as the administration claims. They don't understand how $500 billion in cuts to Medicare won't affect the millions of seniors who depend on it. Americans don't understand how they'll be able to keep the health plans they have if government is allowed to undermine the private market. And they don't understand why the administration doesn't seem to be listening to these and many other concerns.

Americans want specifics. They want solid assurances about what health care reform would mean for themselves and for their families and, just as importantly, what it won't mean. Americans have been clear about what they don't want to see in health care reform. Now they want the administration to be clear with them.

One thing that is already apparent in this debate is that the problem isn't the administration's sales pitch. The problem is what they are selling. Americans are rightly concerned about a rush to hike taxes on small businesses, cut seniors' Medicare benefits, and add trillions of dollars in more government spending and debt. For months, the President and Democrats in Congress have been describing their plans for reform. The status quo is unacceptable. But if August showed us anything, it is that so are the alternatives that the administration and Democrats in Congress have proposed.

Tonight, the President has an opportunity to reframe the debate, but only if he recognizes that the Democrats' original plan for health care reform doesn't wash with the American people. When it comes to health care, Americans don't want government to tear down the house we have. They want it to repair the one we have. That means sensible, step-by-step reforms, not more trillion dollar grand schemes. It means preserving what people like about our health care system, not destroying it all at once or starving it over time.

A government takeover on the installment plan—or a ''trigger'' as some are calling it—is still a government takeover. It is a bad idea now. It will be a bad idea whenever the trigger kicks in. Proponents of a trigger say that it might not be needed. But you can be sure of this: if Democrats are in charge, they will pull the trigger at some point. Let's be honest. Letting Democrats decide whether to pull the trigger on government-run health care is like asking the pitcher, not the umpire, to call the balls and strikes.

Proponents of a trigger also say that Republicans approved one for the Medicare drug benefit. What they don't say is that ours was designed to ensure competition, not to stifle it. That trigger would have prohibited the government from being a fallback plan. This trigger would make the government the regulator, the payer, and a competitor, and put the taxpayer on the hook for its cost. Don't be fooled: proponents of government-run health care realized last month that ''government plan'' had become a dirty word, so they latched onto a new way to describe the same thing: a trigger. Americans aren't confused by the Democrats' reform proposal. They are not asking for a new sales pitch. How many ways do they need to say it: Americans oppose a government takeover of health care, regardless of what it is called.

Over the past several weeks, I have visited with doctors, nurses, seniors, hospital workers, small businessmen and women, and countless others citizens across Kentucky and throughout the country—none of whom would call our current health care system perfect. But all of them are worried about so-called reforms that would undermine the things they like about the American health care system.

People are concerned about a proposal that would raid Medicare rather than strengthening and preserving it. Most of the Democratic proposals we have seen would increase taxes on small businesses. People don't understand why the administration would even entertain the idea of raising taxes on the businesses that create jobs in a country that has already lost millions of jobs since January.

Every Democratic proposal we have seen expands Medicaid, a program that is administered by the Federal Government but largely paid for by the States. Republican and Democratic Governors cannot believe the administration is proposing a massive new expenditure at a moment when many of these States cannot even pay the bills they already have.

Many of these States are struggling just to survive in the current economy, and yet Democratic lawmakers in Washington want to spend billions to expand Medicaid and then send the bill to the States. No wonder so many Americans think lawmakers in Washington are totally and completely out of touch.

Most States are constitutionally required to have a balanced budget. This means if the Federal Government forces them to increase spending on Medicaid, they will have no choice but to either cut services or raise taxes. That means Americans would be hit twice, first by the taxes on small business, then by the higher taxes from State government, all from massive overhauls they do not want.

People do not want risky, sweeping changes that increase the national debt and do not solve the problems we have. That is why I have been calling instead for commonsense reforms that build on the current system, for things such as ending junk lawsuits on doctors and hospitals that drive up health care costs, lowering the costs for individual consumers by equalizing the tax treatment for individuals and businesses, and incentivizing healthy living to prevent diseases and to treat problems early.

For years, Republicans have sought reforms that would increase access to care, reforms that had the strong support of the American people, whether it was proposing to let small businesses pool their resources together to get the same competitive rates as big businesses or by establishing health savings accounts that give people greater control over their care and their dollars. For years, we have pushed for medical liability reform and called on Congress to strengthen Medicare and Medicaid by fixing these necessary but financially strapped programs.

Most Democrats have resisted most of these incremental changes, hoping the day would come when they could create a whole new dramatic scheme from the ground up under government control. This summer they actually tried to do that, and the American people told them to try again. Their message has been loud and it has been clear: No more spending money we do not have on programs we do not need. No more debt. No more government expansion. And no government takeover of health care.

Americans do not want us to walk off the field. They want us to recommit ourselves to the reforms they want. If Democrats agree, we will be their partners. If they resist the pleas of the American people to start over, we will not. All of us have heard a lot from the American people last month. Now is the time to show we were listening.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MARTINEZ. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

TRAVEL PROMOTION ACT OF 2009—Continued

Mr. MARTINEZ. I feel appreciative for all of the kind comments on the floor today, especially the latest from the Republican leader.

I want to take a moment to speak about the item we will be voting on this afternoon. It may be my last vote, and one which is an issue I have been working on since I was mayor in Orange County, FL, a tourism destination in this tourism and travel promotion bill.

Florida is a global tourist destination, as we all know, and tourism in Florida has suffered as so many other sectors of our economy have, including a 10-percent drop in the first quarter of 2009 in travelers to Florida.

Florida continues to have 10.7 percent unemployment. Tourism bookings at places such as Walt Disney World are down 7 percent over the last year, all of which suggests that in order for us to move beyond this recessionary period and the 10.7 unemployment we see in Florida, it is incumbent upon us to do two things: No. 1 is quit blacklisting destinations such as Florida, Orlando, Miami, Las Vegas, by the government and others. It ought to be okay to travel to these great destinations.

But the second would be to move and pass this travel and tourism bill, the Trade Promotion Act, which would establish an independent nonprofit corporation for U.S. travel promotion, governed by an 11-member board of individuals appointed by the Secretary of Commerce.