

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 black-listing 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.

It would be funded not by taxpayers but instead through the user fees paid by foreign tourists and in-kind contributions by corporate partners. It is something that is absolutely needed. Foreign tourism is a huge source of revenues to States such as Florida and the leader's State of Nevada. It is something that I think is long overdue. So passing this bill today will be a great accomplishment for our Nation, and it will be a tremendous boon to a tourism economy that is reeling in these recessionary times. It will make me awfully happy that this will be something I can sort of button up my Senate career with, a good bill for Florida and a good bill for the people of Florida today unemployed in the tourism industry.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR MEL MARTINEZ

Mr. REID. Before my friend leaves the floor, I was planning to come later with some prepared remarks, but let me speak from my heart about the Senator from Florida.

I have some affinity for the Senator from Florida because we were both trial lawyers. We have been to court, we have voir dired juries, we have argued cases to juries. We were both trial lawyers. I feel that as a badge of honor. Some people denigrate trial lawyers. But I feel that the people whom I have tried to help over the years were people who deserved to be helped.

My friend from Florida was the president of the State trial lawyers in Florida. He has a tremendously sound reputation as a trial lawyer, somebody who took good cases, worked them hard, judges liked him, and his opponents liked him, which speaks well of this man.

But my feelings about Senator MARTINEZ go deeper than that. I have had the good fortune of being able to attend our prayer breakfasts on occasion here. I try to get to them as often as I can, every Wednesday morning when we are in session, at 8 o'clock.

I have heard my friend from Florida talk about his upbringing, his faith. He is a devout Catholic. He is proud of that. He is very proud of his heritage, Cuban American, versus the difficulties that have been caused by the tyrannical government of Fidel Castro.

I also am impressed with Senator MARTINEZ as a result of his family ties. He speaks so highly of his relationship with his lovely wife. I have had the opportunity to know his family. On rare occasions he came and asked me if there was a way I could help him with a family member, recognizing the kind of person he is and the family associations that he has.

The people of the State of Florida are losing a good Senator, a good man. I will miss MEL MARTINEZ.

ORDER FOR RECESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that today the Senate recess from 3 to 4 p.m. in order for Members to participate in the 9/11 remembrance ceremony in Statuary Hall.

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time from 4 to 4:45 p.m. today be divided as follows: 22½ minutes to be divided equally between Senators DORGAN and the Republican leader or his designee, for debate with the respect to S. 1023, and that upon the use of that time, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the nomination of Cass Sunstein, and that the remaining 22½ minutes until 4:45 be equally divided and controlled between Senator LIEBERMAN and the Republican leader or his designee; that at 4:45 p.m. the Senate resume legislative session and all postcloture time having expired, all amendments be withdrawn except the Dorgan amendment No. 1347, and that amendment No. 1347 then be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid on the table; that the bill, as amended, be read a third time and the Senate then proceed to vote on passage of S. 1023, as amended; that upon passage of S. 1023, as amended, the Senate then resume executive session and vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Cass Sunstein.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll of the Senate.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRAVEL PROMOTION ACT OF 2009—Continued

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I hoped that my colleague from North Dakota might be here, and perhaps we will still get together before the debate concludes on the tourism bill. But I think we were two ships passing in the night earlier today. He was quoting statistics that had to do with individual people. I was quoting statistics that had to do with monetary receipts. We were both getting at the problem of whether tourism was up or down, and I told him I would get the source of my statistics and we could reengage in that debate.

The primary point the Senator from North Dakota was making was that from his statistics, relating to the number of people, tourism was down. I had asserted that based upon Com-

merce Department statistics tourism receipts were very much up. So let me quote the statistics from the Office of Travel and Tourism Industries at the Commerce Department for 2008. I quote:

Total travel receipts reached unprecedented levels in 2008, with a record-breaking \$142.1 billion on travel to, and tourism-related activities, within the United States—an increase of 16 percent over the previous record set in 2007.

That is what I had quoted earlier today.

The Senator from North Dakota said: Well, my statistics show that tourism is down. I think he was quoting numbers of tourists. I do not know whether that discrepancy is real. I do not question his statistics, but I did want to verify mine come from the Department of Commerce. Presumably they are valid.

He had also raised a question as to whether that includes travel from Mexico and Canada. My understanding is, yes, this statistic does include receipts for travel and tourism for all travelers to the United States, which would include Mexico and Canada.

Also, according to a press release and information that was gathered by the Senate Republican policy committee, the Commerce Department's Office of Travel and Tourism Industries also issued a travel forecast in May of 2009 that foreign travel will reach a record high of 64 million travelers to the United States by the year 2013. Again, that includes travel from all countries, which would include Mexico and Canada.

The Commerce Department also estimates that travel to the United States by visitors from countries other than Mexico and Canada should rebound by 2012. The point is that through a series of situations, including, primarily economic conditions, there has been a lower level of travel after 2008 by overseas travelers.

This Commerce Department forecast also said, as I said earlier today, it is important to continue to work on those initiatives which will facilitate visits by overseas travelers, including adequate infrastructure of ports of entry, visa services, and funding to make the online registration requirements for foreign visitors truly easy and operational.

My point earlier today was that rather than charging \$10 a visa for foreign travelers to come here to encourage more foreign tourism, which seemed to me to be rather counterproductive, and since there is plenty of travel promotion activity by the Department of Commerce, by States, by localities—you can hardly turn on the TV without seeing some community or State advertising, promoting tourism within its area—that what we should be doing is devoting any resources we have available for this purpose to improving the infrastructure at our ports of entry, our visa requirements, and other travel accommodations for those visitors who