

under a commander's charismatic leadership; some are frustrated with local leaders. So I believe there is significant potential to go after what I would call mid- and low-level Taliban fighters and leaders and offer them reintegration into Afghanistan under the constitution.

But this game-changing possibility was apparently not factored into General McChrystal's assessment. There is no plan yet to put in place a Sons of Iraq approach in Afghanistan. It is urgent that we lay out the steps that need to be taken to involve local and national Afghan leaders in that effort. They alone can accomplish this crucial job, but first we and our Afghan allies must draft such a plan on an urgent basis, and the potential positive impact of such a plan should be taken into account as we consider the need for any additional U.S. military resources.

Afghanistan's people are grateful for our aid but also eager to assume responsibility for their own future. In a tiny village in Helmand Province, we were invited to meet with the village elders at their council meeting—called a shura. A group of 100 or so men sat on the floor and chatted with us about their future and their country's future. When asked how long the United States should stay, one elder said: "Until the moment that you make our security forces self-sufficient. Then you will be welcome to visit us not as soldiers but as guests."

Helping Afghanistan achieve self-sufficiency and their own security is everybody's goal. On that, there is little difference of opinion in Afghan's village councils or in the corridors of this Capitol. Can we help Afghanistan reach self-sufficiency in security fast enough? Can we get there in a way that regains the initiative and creates the momentum we need? Can we encourage those lower level Taliban to abandon an insurgency headed by terrorists whose fanaticism they do not share? I believe we can, by supporting a far more rapid growth in the Afghan Army and police, by providing more trainers more quickly, by a rapid infusion of two Afghan units of equipment no longer needed in Iraq, and by rapidly adopting a plan for the reintegration of lower level Taliban fighters into Afghan society. In other words, we need a surge of Afghan security forces. Our support of their surge will show our commitment to the success of a mission that is clearly in our national security interest, without creating a bigger U.S. military footprint that provides propaganda fodder for the Taliban.

I believe taking those steps on an urgent basis, while completing the previously planned and announced increase in U.S. combat forces, provides the best chance of success for our mission—preventing Afghanistan from again being run by a Taliban government which harbors and supports al-Qaida, whose goal is to inflict additional catastrophic attacks on the United States and the world. I believe we should implement those steps before

considering an increase in U.S. ground combat forces beyond what is already planned by the end of the year.

I yield the floor and thank the Senator from Ohio as well.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I thank the chairman for his leadership.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, excuse me. I thought I would have time at 10:30.

Mr. BROWN. I will speak no more than 10 minutes, so you will be free to have the floor by 10:30. I will yield the floor well before 10:30.

Mr. BOND. The Senator said 2 minutes?

Mr. BROWN. No, up to 10 minutes, I was told.

Mr. BOND. May I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended? I need 15 minutes. I ask that morning business be extended for an additional 10 minutes to accommodate my colleague from Ohio.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection? The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, if the Senator would amend that to include the Senator from Florida as well?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I 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. BOND. 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.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask that the Senator from Ohio be recognized for 10 minutes, that I be recognized for 15 minutes, and that following that the Senator from Florida be recognized for 15 minutes.

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

The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, 2 nights ago the President of the United States spoke in the Chamber down the hall on the other side of the Capitol. He did what he needed to do. As I have been in the House and Senate—the House for 14 years and the Senate now for 2½—it was the best speech I had ever seen in my time, sitting and listening to the last three Presidents. Most importantly, it explained why this health care bill is so important and why it works for those who already have insurance as it builds consumer protections around those insurance policies—

no more preexisting conditions, no more cutting people's care off because they have been too expensive, no more discrimination based on gender or disability or age or geography. It explained why this legislation makes sense for people who do not have insurance, who have been without insurance or who have inadequate insurance. It really explained well why this legislation is so important to small business.

I have come to this floor almost daily when we were in session the last few months, to share stories of Ohioans. I know the Presiding Officer, as he traveled in his State, in Northern Virginia and Richmond and Roanoke, has heard these stories and gets these letters, too, showing the depth of the problem. So many people don't have health care, and so many who do have insurance have seen significant problems. They have paid their premiums month after month. Then they get very sick, they may have to take biologic drugs, they may have long hospital visits, their health care may have cost \$100,000 or \$200,000, and their insurance company simply cuts them off. How is that fair?

Let me share some of these letters today for 7 or 8 minutes and then make some comments about them.

Yvon from Wakeman in Huron County in northern Ohio writes:

My husband, a union carpenter, was out of work for 7 months straight. He just went back to work in June on a week-by-week basis.

My husband must get 130 hours of work per month to get insurance. Otherwise, we have to keep paying for COBRA, which expires at the end of the year.

It is also expensive.

In June he earned 129½ hours and we were told that because it was not the required 130 hours, we had to pay out of pocket. We offered to pay for the ½ hour and were told no, we could not.

There is no way in the world we can afford to pay for private insurance. If my husband does not have enough hours, we will have no insurance. It goes month to month like that. I am a wife, mother, sister, cousin and aunt. I want to live.

She loses her insurance and can't get her insurance out of a technicality. These things will simply not happen under this health insurance legislation we are considering over the weeks ahead, where insurance companies can deny care for a whole host of reasons, where somebody might not qualify for health insurance. Yvon and her husband will be able to go in the health care exchange. They will be able to get into private care. They can get insurance, if they choose, from Aetna or BlueCross. They can work with their union plan that her husband apparently has as a carpenter or they can go into public option. She would have those choices.

Bob from Cleveland has been an owner of a steel processing firm since 1990 and has had to grapple with deteriorating health benefits over the last 5 years. His firm employs 30 employees, 20 of whom depend on the company's depreciating health care coverage

while the remaining 10 have had to use alternative forms of insurance—perhaps a spouse who works has a good insurance plan. He is hoping that the reform will address the burden shouldered by small businesspeople and that Congress will craft legislation that protects small businesses from high insurance deductibles and premiums.

The Presiding Officer was in business before he was Governor of Virginia and understands this as a business person. When you have a small number of employees, you pay a lot more per employee for insurance than if you are a larger company. Even worse, if you have 20 or 30 employees and 2 or 3 of them get very sick and get very expensive care, that small businessperson—the owner, the company—sees their premiums, their costs go way up or they sometimes get cut off entirely.

This legislation will allow Bob and his business to take his entire business, if he so chooses, into the exchange and go to Signa or go to Medical Mutual in Cleveland—it is a not-for-profit Ohio company—or go to Aetna or go to BlueCross or go into the public option. Bob would have that choice in his business. He also would be eligible for significant tax credits as a small businessperson.

Ricky from Garfield Heights, OH, writes:

My doctor tried to order a MRI for my back pain. The insurance company declined the request, saying I had to try therapy which only worsened [my condition]. Finally, insurance approved an MRI.

But shortly after that, my employer could no longer afford that insurance and had to switch to a new provider, which also meant I had to find a new doctor.

Still suffering from back pain, the new doctor told me I needed another MRI. I asked about using the first MRI, but the new insurance company told me I had to get another one. So I am back to square one, with a bulging disk in my back.

One of the important things in this legislation is you can keep what you have. If you have a physician, you will not be forced into another plan and have to choose another physician or another hospital or another physical therapist, as happened in Ricky's case, or another occupational therapist.

Sharon from Springboro, OH, between Dayton and Cincinnati, in Warren County.

My husband had a stroke in June 2009 and was released from the hospital a few weeks ago. That's when the real problems started. Our private insurer increased co-pays to \$560 a week for the therapy my husband needs. I also learned insurance will stop by the end of the year.

There's been a lot of worry. We need help now.

That is the point. This legislation, some people have said—I had townhall meetings, meetings all over my State, as many did here. Typically, more people were supportive, who showed up—more were for the bill than against, but there was certainly a significant number of people against it. But a lot of people said: You have to slow down; we don't want to take this too fast.

As President Obama said the other night, Teddy Roosevelt wanted this 100 years ago. Harry Truman, President Kennedy, President Johnson, President Nixon, President Clinton—so many people tried to do this. We have been working on this legislation intensively all year. The Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee that Senator Kennedy chaired, on which I sit, had 11 days of what is called markup, intensive debate, vetting—I have never seen a committee have that long a period of examination of a bill like that. We accepted 160 Republican amendments, and I voted for most of those amendments. This bill has a lot of bipartisan aspects in it. On the big questions, there are philosophical disagreements to be sure. The point is, every day we wait, 30 people in my State lose their insurance—30 people every single day.

Sharon from Springboro doesn't want us to wait any longer. We waited. We worked on this. We need to do this by the end of the year.

I will conclude with this one because I know Senator BOND wants to take the floor in a moment.

Vondolee from Franklin County:

We need health insurance reform. My step-father has Medicaid, without which he would have died some time ago. As a young man, he had routine shoulder surgery but was transfused with blood that was contaminated with Hepatitis C. He subsequently suffers from other health problems, including deep bone ulcers. Thank goodness he had Medicaid because he would not have been able to pay for his care and recovery.

Please help the people, not the insurance or pharmaceutical companies.

Mr. President, your comment on the insurance and pharmaceutical companies—I was here in the House of Representatives when the Medicare partial privatization legislation was written 5 or 6 years ago. By and large, it was written by the drug and insurance companies. It provided a lot of private dollars that went to both of those industries.

Frankly, there is a very strong insurance lobby here in this Congress today. The insurance industry is spending up to \$1 million a day lobbying against it. Insurance companies don't like this legislation.

A lot of the myths we hear in our town meetings, the myths about illegal immigrants getting coverage under this plan, getting subsidies—not true; the myths about death panels—not true; the myths about euthanasia—not true. A lot of that comes from the insurance companies in this town. They have a lot to lose. If this legislation passes, the insurance companies will not do quite as well as they have been doing, but this bill is in the public interest, not in the special interests.

Those are some of the letters I have received. I know many in this body receive letters just like this from people all over their States.

This legislation is necessary. We need to work hard and move forward on this in the weeks ahead.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Missouri.

SUCCEEDING IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, 8 years ago today, terrorists based in Afghanistan carried out the deadliest attacks on American soil since Pearl Harbor. It was on that horrifying September morning in 2001 that America's worst fears were realized. No longer was terrorism something that only happened on the other side of the globe. Instead, those terrorist killers had struck the very heart of America here at home.

Long before 9/11, there were deadly warnings, warnings that for the most part went unheeded. For over two decades, al-Qaida and other terrorists attacked our Nation, from the marine barracks bombing in Beirut in October 1983 to the Pan Am 103 bombing in 1988, from the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993 to the Embassy bombings in 1998, to the USS *Cole* attacks in 2000. While al-Qaida declared war against the United States a long time ago, it took the tragedy of September 11 and the loss of thousands of lives before America decided to fight back.

Today, as we reflect on the anniversary of 9/11 and the lives lost that day, we can honor the victims and their families by finishing the job in Afghanistan and defeating the terrorists who are bent on death and destruction.

I agree with the comments of my colleague, the Senator from Michigan, who said that we need to build the Afghan Army to 240,000. We need to build and strengthen the Afghan police. But we also must support President Obama's chosen general, GEN Stanley McChrystal, in his request for needed troops and resources.

President Obama has called Afghanistan an "international security challenge of the highest order." I agree. When the President stressed that "the safety of people around the world is at stake," he did not overstate the importance of succeeding in Afghanistan.

President Obama used even starker terms when he spoke to our veterans at this year's VFW convention and said:

Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which al-Qaida would plot to kill more Americans. So this is not only a war worth fighting, this is fundamental to the defense of our people.

I could not agree more. While the President has used this week to pitch health care reform, I hope after reflecting on the anniversary of the September 11 attacks, he will refocus his attention and that of the American people on achieving victory in Afghanistan.

To repeat, terrorism is the premiere challenge of our time. If we fail to conquer this challenge, nothing else will matter much, not even health care reform. As Vice Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, I can tell you that al-Qaida and other radical Islamic