

to listen to those voices as well. They deserve to be heard in this debate. Then I hope we will have the kind of full-throated debate when we get back, meet with the other body with a final product, and hopefully give the President of the United States a bill worthy of the challenge before us.

This is the single largest reform of financial services since the thirties. It is long overdue. We must not fail in our obligation to meet the challenges. If we leave here failing to do this, we will expose our economy, and the American public will never, ever again write a check as they did in the fall of 2008. You can forget about that. We need to make sure these firms that get into trouble understand the presumption is bankruptcy, receivership. Shareholders will pay a price, and management goes. The idea that you are going to be able to count somehow on the American taxpayer pulling your chestnuts out of the fire is over within the "too big to fail" concept.

The importance of achieving that goal along with these other reforms I think will have the desired effect. Failure to do that leaves us exposed to the kinds of financial challenges we have witnessed over the last several years.

Again, a business, I say respectfully, in Connecticut, Delaware, or Colorado, a homeowner in those States should not have to pay the price because a handful of financial institutions got too greedy, too risky, and were unwilling to examine what they were doing or did, recognizing the Federal Government would bail them out if they made a bad choice, which they did.

I look forward to that debate and presenting the bill our committee marked up on Monday of this past week.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on behalf of the millions of Americans who know our Nation is desperately in need of health care reform. Traveling across Colorado this past year, a common theme surfaced as I spoke with families, health care providers, and businesses alike. They all want a health care system that tackles costs, improves quality, and puts their needs first.

I have heard, as I know the Presiding Officer has in his home State of Delaware, stories of Coloradans who paid a lifetime of health care premiums in order to provide for their families, all to have an insurance company drop their coverage because a wife or a husband or a child became ill.

Visiting with health care providers, I heard about the waste and abuse in our system. They have all pleaded with me to have commonsense reforms that get them back to the business they thought they were entering years ago—

the business of caring for their fellow Americans beset by illness and disease.

I heard from small business owners who continue to see double-digit increases in insurance costs, in many cases for the ninth or the tenth or even more years in a row. These small business owners want to see relief, not for themselves but because they do not want to have to choose between laying off workers and leaving their workers vulnerable to medical bankruptcies.

Decade after decade, we see how the fine print of insurance company policies puts shareholder interests above those of American families and how partisanship has prevented the kind of progress everyone agrees is sorely needed.

I have good news. Despite all the ugly rhetoric, distortions, and misrepresentations we have heard, Coloradans and the rest of the country can finally rest assured that someone has put their interests first.

This week, I watched as President Obama signed into law the kind of reforms that will free Americans from the shackles of never-ending cost increases, dropped coverage, and unfair practices that put profits above the provision of care.

Throughout this past fall and winter, I joined you, Mr. President, and the rest of our freshman class in the Chamber repeatedly to talk about the urgent need for health care reform. We shot down false claims, challenged the phony reasoning that was out there, and pointed out where the rhetoric ends and reality begins.

Over the past few days, many more of our colleagues from this side of the aisle have compellingly and eloquently explained how important the new health reform law is to both the American people and the American economy. The fact is that this historic bill signed by the President saves lives, saves money, and it saves Medicare.

Bringing this long debate to a close, I wish to speak directly to the people of Colorado. It is important that they know how these health insurance reforms will benefit their families and the rest of our great State.

As a result of the President signing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act into law, the parents of Colorado's 1.2 million children can sleep easy starting this year knowing that insurance companies no longer have the right to deny their kids health care coverage because of a preexisting condition.

Also starting in 2010, almost half a million, 500,000 young adults in Colorado who would otherwise be kicked off their parents' health care policies can maintain that coverage through to their 27th birthday. This is particularly welcome to me, as I know it is for many Coloradans, because I have two college-age kids who fit into the category I just described.

We have 575,000 seniors in our Medicare Program, and for every single one of them, this new law will protect—I

want to emphasize that—will protect their guaranteed benefits and immediately allow them to get preventive care with absolutely no copay or out-of-pocket costs. This added benefit, contrary to what we have heard, will increase their health care coverage under the Medicare Program so that our seniors can continue to live happy and healthy lives.

This new law goes to great lengths to help slow the growth of health care costs and, by doing so, it is projected that these lower costs will allow Colorado's employers to hire up to 6,500 new employees in our State. And for as many as 68,000 small businesses, health reform will begin providing millions of dollars in tax credits so they can afford to offer health insurance to their employees.

Yesterday, we sat here and cast 56 votes as Democrats to make final improvements to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. That reconciliation measure we passed yesterday will provide prescription drug relief as well for our Colorado seniors. More than 100,000 Colorado seniors, such as my friend Frank Blakely in Colorado Springs, will pay less for prescription drugs.

Right now, these seniors hit what we all know here as the Medicare part D doughnut hole, which means they have to pay thousands of dollars directly out of pocket for their medicines. But beginning this year, every one of these seniors will receive a \$250 check to help them offset those costs, and we will begin to close the overall gap in Medicare coverage so that we completely fill this doughnut hole by the year 2020. I know this will be welcome relief to those on fixed incomes all across the United States, because it will free up scarce retirement dollars to visit family members, help pay a grandchild's college tuition or even to help, in some cases, put food on the table.

I think one of the overriding features of health reform is the freedom it will give to Coloradans and hard-working Americans—the freedom to change jobs, to launch a business, to even start a family while knowing that health care coverage will be there for them when they need it. Americans need to know their country won't leave them to fend for themselves when an insurance company denies or drops their coverage. They deserve peace of mind to know that someone is on their side.

Over the last few days we have heard a lot of the same misleading rhetoric that we did back in August by those who were dead set on levying accusations rather than working on real reform. Well, health reform has become the law of the land and the American people don't have to wait any longer for these important reforms. The legislation we passed will establish a sturdy foundation upon which we will build, improve, and strengthen access to health care in America. Will there be mistakes made along the way? I don't doubt it.

I am a lifelong mountain climber, and I know from experience that any difficult climb includes storms, and you make a mistake finding your route along the way. But what matters is that you dust yourself off and you move forward. I think there have been a lot of storms on this journey so far, and it hasn't been perfectly smooth. But it has been in the right direction. Despite our stumbles and twists and turns along the way, we kept our eye on the summit in front of us, where providing quality affordable coverage for every American is a reality.

Every successful expedition, in my experience, has a leader, and I want to take a moment to recognize our leader, Senate Majority Leader REID. He has literally had the health and well-being of millions of Americans on his shoulders—some would say the weight of the world. That is a heavy backpack. But at the same time he has shouldered that load, been an unwavering advocate for reform, and he has exemplified the American resiliency which has helped make our Nation the greatest Nation on Earth.

I would also like to thank my staff, especially Jake Swanton and John Rayburn, who have worked tirelessly to fight for Colorado and make quality affordable health coverage a reality for millions of Americans.

As I close, I want to say how proud I am that the health care bills we passed this week will modernize our health care delivery system, increase much-needed choice and competition within the health insurance industry, and help put our economy back on track, while clearly improving the financial security of middle-class working families.

This has been an historic week for Colorado and for the American people. The victory, of course, isn't for the Senate or the House, or the President, or for our political parties, it is for the American people. I have certainly been humbled to have been given the opportunity to serve my great State during this unforgettable, long, and sustained debate, and I look forward to the important climbs that still await us as we implement this very important piece of legislation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of Colorado). Without objection, it is so ordered.

PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the signing of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was historic. In addition to providing coverage and lowering health insurance costs for millions of

Americans, the legislation will truly transform how care is delivered in the United States. As part of this new law, we are improving Medicare for the seniors and people with disabilities who depend on the program, extending the solvency of the program, and closing the prescription drug doughnut hole.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act creates the Independent Payment Advisory Board, IPAB. The Finance Committee, led by Chairman BAUCUS and Senator ROCKEFELLER, devised the board to provide reason and expertise to Medicare payment policy. Experts have concluded that the board will in fact bend the cost curve, achieving key goals of health reform: lowering costs overall and increasing Medicare's longevity.

Built into the IPAB are protections for beneficiaries from limits on care and increased costs. The Senate will ensure that the new board operates in a transparent way with input from patients, providers, and experts to guarantee the best outcomes and continued access to care. Moreover, we in the Senate will oversee Medicare and the IPAB to protect the seniors and people with disabilities. Medicare is one of our most treasured programs, and the IPAB will only improve the program for beneficiaries in the future.

COWBOY POETRY WEEK

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the ninth annual Cowboy Poetry Week, which will be celebrated from April 18 to 24, 2010. Across the Western States, in public libraries, museums, and over the airwaves, cowboy poets and cowboy poetry enthusiasts will come together to celebrate the spirit of the West through this unique art form. What began as storytelling over the campfire has evolved into both a way to preserve the history and culture of the West, as well as a modern art form that embraces the cowboy way of life.

The National Cowboy Poetry Gathering, in Elko, NV, celebrated its 26th anniversary this January. Through events like this, cowboy poetry has experienced a resurgence in recent years, at once preserving recitation traditions that are a central form of artistry in communities throughout the West and promoting popular poetry and literature to the general public. At cowboy poetry gatherings, urban populations are able to glimpse a way of life that continues to exist on rangelands across the West.

As someone from a small town in Nevada, I have seen firsthand how the West has changed since I was young, but thanks to cowboy poets, among others, we will never lose the true spirit of the West. For this reason, I would like to thank the thousands of people out there in a few short weeks celebrating Cowboy Poetry Week, and I wish them all an enjoyable and successful week.

RECONCILIATION

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, over the last several days, the Senate voted on a number of amendments to H.R. 4872, the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010. This important legislation makes changes to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which President Obama signed into law on Tuesday. In short, it makes a good bill better.

Now, at the very last minute, my colleagues on the other side have offered a number of amendments designed to play games with Americans' health care and to cause delays and obstructions as we reach final passage of this bill. I voted against the long list of amendments offered by the other side—as did the majority of the Senate—not because some weren't good amendments but because this was not the appropriate legislation to attach them to. I have been and will continue to be a champion of many of these issues, but I will not vote to play games with the health care of American families. Trying to tackle these issues at the last minutes of the health care debate is not appropriate or wise or responsible. Instead, I look forward to working with my colleagues in the coming months to find bipartisan solutions to these problems.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, today I rise to speak on the important occasion of Women's History Month. Since 1987, the month of March has been dedicated not only to remembering and appreciating the distinguished accomplishments of women, but also to commending their continued positive influence on society. I would like to call particular attention to the contributions of North Carolina women, as they have consistently proven themselves to be revolutionary in their thoughts and actions and have contributed immensely to the development of our Nation since its conception.

Our way of life has been bettered in countless ways by women revolutionaries, crusaders, politicians, athletes, and everyday citizens of North Carolina. From the 51 patriotic women who organized the Edenton Tea Party to Dolley Madison, whose social grace and political acumen helped create the modern White House; from Harriet Jacobs, a North Carolina escaped slave who exposed the injustices of slavery in her "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl," to Mary Jane Patterson, the first African-American woman to receive a bachelor of arts degree; from Tabitha Ann Holton, the first licensed female attorney in North Carolina and the South, to Dr. Annie Lowrie Alexander, the State's first female physician; from Sallie Walker Stockard, the first woman to graduate from the University of North Carolina to Kay Yow, the great North Carolina State University women's basketball coach who led