

that President Bush and the Republican Congress created.

We are seeing major progress which affects individual people. Mary from Ashtabula, OH, which is in the northeast corner of the State, shared a story with me about her friend who is paying \$56 each month for medications to treat her chronic illness. After the doughnut hole kicks in, she worries that her friend will have to pay literally 10 times that—not \$56, which she can handle, but literally \$500 per month, which she can't. This increase will catastrophically affect her friend, who is 80 years old and living on a tight budget. Next year, because of this legislation that is taking effect now, Mary's friend will see her prescription drug costs cut in half.

Robert from Cleveland wrote me a letter sharing his concerns about being young and uninsured. As happens to many young adults, Robert was dropped from his mother's insurance on his 21st birthday. He has been unable to obtain full-time employment. He has remained uninsured, not by choice but because he really had no options. In fact, he saw the risks associated with being uninsured firsthand as he accompanied his also uninsured friend to the hospital after sustaining a basketball injury not too long ago. His friend left the emergency room with a \$3,000 bill. Robert understands that young adults such as him and his friend will no longer have to face the uncertainty and fear associated with being uninsured.

This legislation also, as of yesterday, allows States such as Ohio and every State in the country to set up what are called high-risk insurance pools. We all know—and the Presiding Officer knows it from talking to people in Rochester and Duluth and St. Paul, and I have talked to people in Toledo and Dayton and Springfield who can't get insurance because they have a preexisting condition. So 462 Ohioans already have signed up for what is called this high-risk insurance pool. That means that even with a preexisting condition, those 462 Ohioans have insurance. Six months ago, they were uninsured and uninsurable. Today, they have insurance.

Laura from Hamilton County wrote to me when she learned about the health care law. She wrote:

I cheered when I learned that children with chronic conditions cannot be denied health insurance coverage. I have a child with Type 1 diabetes. I have worried for years about what will become of him as he ages and moves off our insurance policy. I have worried for years what his health plan options will be. It is a relief to now be able to shift our efforts to battling the disease, not the health care system.

Any mother or father with a sick child wants to focus their efforts on taking care of that illness, not fighting with insurance companies, not worrying about cobbling together payments to pay the doctor, the hospital, and the drug company.

I am proud to say these changes are just the beginning. As of yesterday,

when you renew or purchase a health insurance plan, you don't have to worry about lifetime limits. We know what happens: If you get sick, if you live in Akron or Youngstown and you get very sick and spend a lot of time in the hospital, insurance companies—it is called rescission—will simply cancel your insurance because you exceeded the lifetime limits they set up. Well, no more lifetime limits because of this bill.

From now on, recommended preventive services, immunizations, mammograms, and other recommended screenings, will be covered without a copay or deductible. We want people to get screened, to get preventive care. It saves their health, and it saves all of us money. So they can get less expensive health care. For them, taking away their requirement to pay copays and deductibles will make a huge difference.

There are now new restrictions on private insurers from placing unreasonable limits on your coverage. Patients can access out-of-network emergency room services and children can no longer be denied insurance because of a preexisting condition. Think of the parents we talk to who have a child who is sick and can't get insurance because that child has a preexisting condition, as if a parent wanted it that way. Now we have fixed this.

The Presiding Officer was part of this debate, as all of us in this institution were, during last year and the beginning of this year when we passed this bill. We know what the opponents—people speaking mostly on behalf of the insurance industry, the drug industry, and people who just don't agree that we should do something like this—we know what they did. They lied about death panels. They spread half-truths about costs. They even labeled health care reform “communism.”

They did the same thing with Medicare. I remember the same arguments when I was a kid. I was 12 years old, 13 years old when Medicare passed. They used the same arguments about Medicare. They said: The government is going to stand between you and your doctor. They said: It is going to turn the United States into the Soviet Union. They said: We are never going to be able to get health insurance again. It is going to be big government running our lives. I don't think they say that about Medicare anymore. They have tried to dismantle and privatize Medicare, but they know it has worked.

In the 1930s, these same people with the same philosophy campaigned against Social Security, saying it wouldn't work. In the 1960s, they campaigned against Medicare, saying it wouldn't work. Now they are campaigning against the health care law.

There are Republicans all over this country—not many voters, I don't think—who are talking about repealing the health care law. So what they are going to do is kick the 23-year-old off

their parents' insurance. Now they are going to take away these tax breaks for small businesses to insure their employees. They are going to reinstate the doughnut hole. They are going to put more costs back on senior citizens, who finally are getting some help with their drug costs. I don't get it. They are going to bring back preexisting conditions. They are going to say it is OK again to deny somebody coverage for a preexisting condition. I don't think the public is going to buy that. I don't think this institution will vote that way.

It is important to recognize from where we have come. Most of all, it is important to think about individual human beings we have met who are affected so positively by this law. They are going to be able to get insurance. They are not going to be denied coverage if they have a preexisting condition. Businesses will be able to help their employees by covering them for insurance. Senior citizens are going to get significant help for their drug costs. What is not to like about that? That is why it is important that we stand firm as we mark this 6-month beginning of these changes that will make our health care system work better, be more responsive to people, and, most importantly, take care of individual Americans better than ever before.

STEELDAY 2010

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the critical role of structural steel in our Nation's infrastructure and industrial economy.

Today, September 24, 2010, is the second annual SteelDay and is being celebrated through events nationwide. These events highlight the many American jobs provided by the structural steel industry and the contributions of structural steel as a safe, strong, green, and effective building material.

The structural steel industry is a major employer in Illinois. Today, the United States has 4 major structural steel mills, 10 hollow structural shape producers, and more than 2,600 steel fabricators. Together, they employ over 185,000 Americans, producing 4.5 million tons of fabricated structural steel in 2009. In Illinois, more than 100 structural steel firms provide more than 2,000 good jobs.

Most of the structured steel in a building can be recovered and recycled—as much as 98 percent. In fact, columns and beams that are made at U.S. steel mills include an average 93 percent of recycled materials. It is the most recycled material on the planet.

There is a renewed interest in this country in domestic steel as a building material, and structural steel accounts for 5 percent of the steel consumed in the United States. Shipping steel from other countries creates a huge and unnecessary carbon footprint. LEED certification, an environmental rating

system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, relies heavily on the use of domestic steel in new construction.

The industry continues to incorporate improvements in the technology used to build steel projects. These improvements are also bringing down construction costs and increasing safety at construction sites. In light of these economic, environmental, and safety factors, it is no surprise that there is a three-to-one preference for using structural steel in the construction of multistory residential and non-residential buildings.

Mr. President, I congratulate the structural steel industry on its second annual SteelDay. Steel manufacturing and construction is driving our Nation's progress into the future.

GREATER OWENSBORO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the remarkable accomplishments of the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce. They were selected as the winner, out of eight National finalists, in the 2010 Chamber of the Year competition sponsored by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives, ACCE. This is quite a feat, as the ACCE's Chamber of the Year is the Nation's only award that recognizes local chambers for their dual role in creating and leading businesses and communities.

Chambers wanting to apply for this award could do so if they had an exceptional year or if they had a program or initiative that went above and beyond expectations. With this in mind, the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce highlighted their success in developing the Chamber Leadership Initiatives for Northwestern Kentucky, C-LINK, alliance and the Owensboro Buys It! program in the application process.

C-LINK includes 12 chambers in the region and has been a leading proponent of Interstate 69 in western Kentucky, one of the largest transportation projects in the region, which has seen significant progress in the past two years. Owensboro Buys It! was started in 2009 to create local commerce and to teach small business leaders how to initiate an "elevator pitch" and sharpen their ability to gain and retain customers. When the chamber board of directors mapped out a strategic plan in 2008, they made it their goal to earn this award by 2012. Because of their hard work, they managed to beat even that audacious goal.

Under the leadership of chamber president Jody Wassmer, the board of directors, staff, and members of the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce made their hometown, their Commonwealth, and this Senator very proud. I ask my colleagues to rise and join me in congratulating them on this honor.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT AMENDMENTS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I commend the House of Representatives for promptly enacting the Freedom of Information Act amendments to the Securities and Exchange Act, Investment Company Act, and Investment Advisers Act of 2010, S. 3717. This bipartisan bill will ensure that the Freedom of Information Act, FOIA, remains an effective tool to provide public access to information about the stability of our financial markets.

This bill will also ensure that the important goals of the historic Wall Street reform law—enhancing transparency, accountability, and confidence in our financial system—will become a reality for all Americans. The bill eliminates several broad FOIA exemptions for Security and Exchange Commission, SEC, records that were recently enacted as part of Public Law 111-203. The bill also helps to ensure that the SEC has access to the information that the Commission needs to carry out its new enforcement activities under the new reforms.

I thank Representative EDOLPHUS TOWNS, the distinguished chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Representative BARNEY FRANK, the distinguished chairman of the House Committee on Financial Services, for their support of this bill and for working with me to quickly enact this legislation. I also thank Senators GRASSLEY, CORNYN, and KAUFMAN for cosponsoring this important open government bill. In addition, I commend the many open government organizations, including OpenTheGovernment.org, the Project on Government Oversight, the American Library Association, and the Sunlight Foundation for their support of this bill.

The Freedom of Information Act has long recognized the need to balance the government's legitimate interest in protecting confidential business records, trade secrets, and other sensitive information from public disclosure, and preserving the public's right to know. To accomplish this, care must always be taken to ensure that exemptions to FOIA's disclosure requirements are narrowly and properly applied. The bill accomplishes this important goal.

I commend the Congress for working in a bipartisan and expeditious manner to eliminate these overly broad FOIA exemptions. I urge the President to promptly sign this good government bill into law.

FEDERAL HIRING FREEZE

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, as chairman of the Senate subcommittee that oversees the Federal workforce, I strongly oppose the proposal by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to impose a hiring freeze for all non-security positions in the Federal Gov-

ernment. If adopted, this proposal would sacrifice our Nation's long-term investments in the employees needed to efficiently and effectively run government programs for a short-sighted approach that does nothing to address our current fiscal challenges.

Far from being fiscally responsible, these policies would end up costing the government more over the long run, by increasing our reliance on contractors whose work would not be capped. Arbitrary restrictions on hiring Federal employees open up opportunities for waste, fraud, and abuse as contracting expands without investment in oversight. Over the past decade, Federal contracts have nearly doubled in size, to over \$500 billion, but the size of the workforce overseeing contractors has stayed constant. We must reverse, not reinforce, that trend.

Over the past two years, we have made efforts to rebalance the work performed by Federal employees and contractors. Many times, replacing contractors with Federal employees allows agencies to more efficiently meet their missions and provide vital services. The American people expect strong leadership from the Federal Government and we must make sure the Federal Government has the people it needs to perform critical functions and to properly oversee the important work done by contractors. Freezing the Federal workforce could once again lead to dramatic overreliance on contractors, putting agency missions and taxpayer dollars at risk.

The American people deserve a government that hires the right people with the right skills to run their government in an effective and efficient manner. An arbitrary cap on Federal employees is a poor substitute for the careful, thoughtful approach to Federal workforce planning we need.

Our Federal civil service is comprised of hard working, talented people who have dedicated their lives to the service of this country—and our way of life would not exist without them. These are honorable men and women who provide critical services to the American people, including protecting our Nation, ensuring that our food and drugs are safe, caring for our wounded warriors, and responding to natural disasters. America's public servants deserve our gratitude and respect. I thank them for their dedication.

AQUACULTURE DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak on an issue that is of great importance to my home State of Louisiana: Federal disaster assistance. As you know, along the gulf coast, we keep an eye trained on the Gulf of Mexico during hurricane season. This is following the devastating one-two punch of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita of 2005 as well as Hurricanes Gustav and Ike last year. Our communities and businesses are still