

House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform? If not, please explain why not.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please have your staff contact Jason Foster at (202) 224-5225. Thank you for your prompt attention these important issues.

Sincerely,

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY,
Ranking Member.

Mr. GRASSLEY. How much time do I have?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 4 minutes remaining.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. I want to talk about immigration and a part of the immigration issue that concerns me, and, by golly, it has something to do with government oversight as well.

Last August, some lawyers at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service drafted internal memos outlining ways that the administration could get around Congress and grant undocumented aliens in the United States legal status. These amnesty memos outline ways that the executive branch could use discretionary authority to make sure thousands—who knows, maybe millions—of people here illegally could stay here without a vote of Congress.

A number of Republicans sent a letter to President Obama urging him to abandon any such plan. We sent several letters to Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano asking for statistics and a briefing on these memos. We asked for assurances that such plans to bypass Congress—I emphasize “plans to bypass Congress”—not be implemented. What did we get? All we got was radio silence.

I raise this issue again today because I am bothered by reports that there is another push for this administration to grant amnesty through Executive order, which only should be done by the law of this Congress, to certain groups of undocumented populations. Surprisingly, the push for this is coming from our friends on the other side of the aisle. Yesterday, 22 Democrats sent a letter to President Obama asking him to turn a blind eye to the law. These 22 Senators said they were OK with having an executive branch go ahead and go around Congress and grant amnesty to those who would be eligible under the so-called DREAM Act. These Senators said they didn't have the votes to get the bill through the Senate last year.

Their approach is in a nonconstitutional fashion to ask the President to have his administration use what is referred to legally as prosecutorial discretion to keep these undocumented individuals here. They claim doing so would be “consistent with our strong interest in the rule of law.” They say doing so would “help to conserve limited enforcement resources.”

I am appalled, and I hope a lot of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle are appalled, that Members of this body think that an Executive order to grant

amnesty behind our backs is not an assault on the democratic process. Congress has the power to change immigration laws and only Congress has the power to change immigration laws. The President has limited authority to grant relief in limited and emergency circumstances. I support the President's power to do that, but it was not meant to be used in a blanket fashion. The request by 22 Members of this body is an affront to our country's long-standing belief in the rule of law, and it is an attack on this body's duty to legislate on behalf of the American people, a power to legislate that the President does not have.

I happen to agree that our immigration policies have to be reformed. I will commit to moving legislation that expands upon or improves the legal avenue we currently have in place. Once again, we have not seen leadership by this President to work on a bill this Congress can support. Until that time comes, it would be foolish and disappointing if this President circumvented the democratic process and did what 22 Members of this body asked him to do in the letter to which I referred.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I rise near the end of this very important and profoundly significant budget debate to make some points not only about the dollars and cents in our health care system, but also to speak about a growing and persistent threat—the threat of irresponsible cutbacks to vital health care services for our Nation's most vulnerable—in the name of an ideological war on women's health care.

Our Nation is in the midst of a fiscal crisis. We need to recognize that there is a very immediate and important imperative to cut the costs of health care in this country. The costs of health care are spiraling out of control at a rate five times the rate of inflation.

The President, commendably, is talking about the need for serious measures and sensible conversation about what can be done to control and reduce the costs of health care. Just this week, the administration initiated Partnership for Patients, which is another step in the President's continuing efforts, and I believe this body's continuing efforts, to prevent and reduce needless costs to our health care system. For example, reducing the incidence of readmissions to hospitals and providing for better outpatient treatment after people are out of the hospital; reducing the incidence of hospital acquired infections; to reducing the incidence of overprescription—or misprescribed drugs—these kinds of costs are preventable. We have an obligation to reduce those costs in health care when they are preventable.

Higher quality at lower cost has to be our objective. And, lowering costs also means preventive care for women when they cannot afford it. That is what Planned Parenthood does. The threat of H. Con. Res. 36 is to that profoundly important goal—higher quality health care at lower cost—that we can achieve as a nation if we invest in preventive care.

The threat of H. Con. Res. 36 is, therefore, not only to the 1.4 million Medicaid patients across the country who would be deprived of that preventive care, and not only to the more than 60,000 women in Connecticut who are at risk, but to all of us, to our families, and to our fiscal health. We know Planned Parenthood saves \$4 for every \$1 invested. Smart investments that go to provide the Pap smears, breast exams, and other kinds of preventive health care that not only save our health care system money, but that are an absolutely critical part of high quality health care in the United States.

But this debate is about more than costs. It is about human beings. It is about those women who need that preventive care for their future and their family's futures and eventually for their children's futures. Every woman across our Nation, including 1.4 million Medicaid patients who consider Planned Parenthood their primary source for preventive health, deserves to visit a health care provider she trusts—a health care provider that many of us have in this body whether we are men or women.

I am talking about women such as Rebecca in Meriden, CT. Rebecca's parents' health coverage did not extend to her, and she made too much money to qualify for Connecticut's Husky Program—too much money meaning \$10 an hour and working part time, a total of \$10,000—too much money to qualify for Husky. She depended on Planned Parenthood for regular health screenings and contraceptive care. As she said in her own words:

Planned Parenthood was my saving grace for my reproductive health.

Women such as Maya, a 23-year-old uninsured young woman, a waitress, part time, doing an unpaid internship for a nonprofit organization. She went to Planned Parenthood for her routine Pap smear, and the results showed abnormal cells that required a biopsy and an operation to have the precancerous cells removed. That procedure could have been lifesaving for Maya; as are all of the routine screenings that Planned Parenthood provides for countless women across the country and in Connecticut. All of these procedures take place day in and day out around Connecticut, for a price they can afford. These stories from Rebecca and Maya are heard around our Nation, at least 60,000 strong in Connecticut alone.

As Martin Masselli, Community Health Center advocate and the president of Community Health Care, Inc. in Middletown, recently said:

Defunding Planned Parenthood would be the moral equivalent of turning off the electricity and a whole segment of health care would go dark.

That is what H. Con. Res. 36 means in human terms. In dollars and cents: preventive health care, the kind of work done by St. Vincent's in Bridgeport and Hartford Hospital, and Yale-New Haven hospital, and countless others around the State and in the country because our hospitals and health care providers are responding responsibly to the need for higher quality and lower costs. We must preserve the momentum to move forward and to make sure the promise, as well as the obligation, the opportunity as well as the mandate, is fulfilled.

I call for my Senate colleagues to stand together for women such as Rebecca and Maya and for clinics and hospitals and providers across the Nation who depend on Planned Parenthood and to reject this resolution, to reject the effort to turn back the clock and to settle this debate once and for all, to end the ideological war which has itself nothing to do with saving money; that in fact, will cost more than it saves. I call for us to turn our attention, as we should and we must, to people who want us to put America back to work to create jobs, to foster economic growth, to fulfill the mandate that was articulated and expressed so eloquently by the people of this country in this last election, which was not to wage war on women's health.

The message was to put Connecticut and put America back to work, create jobs and continue our fragile economic recovery.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today we are going to vote on last year's unfinished business. We are going to vote on a continuing resolution that will fund the government through this fiscal year, which ends on September 30. The proposal we have before us in order to fund the government through the end of the fiscal year certainly is not perfect. In fact, there are many—myself included—who would like to see it make deeper reductions in spending. That said, we will be voting on a proposal that will cut spending by around \$40 billion this year, and when you look at baseline spending over the next decade actually saves over \$300 billion over the 10-year period.

What strikes me about that is that it will be the first time in a long time that we have done something about re-

ducing spending. That is not something routinely or traditionally done here. In fact, we are going to reverse a trend that began a long time ago but accelerated a couple years ago when non-national security discretionary spending increased by almost 25 percent in the last 2 years.

This is an important first step. Granted, it is a first step, and in a minute, I am going to get to the bigger issue, but it is critical that we send a message and signal to the American people that we have heard their voices loudly and clearly and we get what they want us to do; that is, to get spending under control, shrink the size of the Federal Government, to get it to live within its means, and to quit spending money that we do not have in Washington. That is something that has been happening here for a long time. It has taken on a whole new dimension in the last couple of years.

As we talk about the unfinished business of last year, trying to get a measure in place that will fund the government through the end of the year, that will reduce spending by about \$40 billion, we are talking about the smaller part of overall spending when we look at the macroeconomic view or pull back to what some would say to the 30,000-ft. view and look at spending over the next decade. In fact, we had someone testify in the Finance Committee yesterday, the former Comptroller General David Walker. He put it well when he said talking about funding in the continuing resolution is like arguing about the bar tab on the Titanic. We are on a sinking ship, and we need to do everything we can in the short term, getting maximum amount of spending reduction, but then we need to pivot and start talking about the next big battle, and that is the battle over the 2012 budget. Ironically, we are just now getting to the 112th Congress's business because we are wrapping up the business of the 111th Congress. The Democratic leadership here didn't pass a budget last year or a single appropriations bill. As a consequence, we are voting here now on a continuing resolution to do last year's business to get us through the end of this fiscal year before we can start the work of the 2012 budget, which is where I think the big debate will begin about how we get this country back on a more reasonable fiscal path.

We have seen a couple of developments here in the last 2 weeks or so that bear on that debate. One is last week, when we had the introduction by the House Republicans of a budget plan, a 10-year budget plan that was very aggressive in trying to take on the issue of spending and debt, very aggressive in trying to put pro-growth policies in place that would help grow the economy and create jobs and that gets our economy back on track in this country. That was kind of the big discussion last week.

The President, I believe, felt left out of that discussion, so yesterday he de-

cided to make a speech in which he would lay out his vision for the next decade and how we address the big challenges this country needs to tackle. I would describe that speech as a do-over because the President's first trip to the plate was really his budget, which he submitted a couple of months ago. That budget was conspicuously bereft of any effort to address the really big challenges facing the country. It didn't talk about how we are going to reform entitlements, didn't address tax reform, and it actually increased spending—increased taxes and increased the debt dramatically over the next decade. It nearly doubled the gross debt from \$13 trillion or \$14 trillion to over \$26 trillion, and that is using I think pretty optimistic economic assumptions.

That being said, because the President didn't address any of the big issues in his budget and because the House Republicans put a proposal forward last week which would, I think he felt as if he needed to get in the game. So yesterday he made a stridently partisan speech in which he tried to put forth a plan. I would argue that speech yesterday was very long on politics and very short on substance. There wasn't a lot in there to really sink your teeth into if you are someone who believes seriously that we need to make reforms in entitlement programs. There was the usual prescription for dealing with the deficit and the debt, which consisted of increasing taxes. There are tax increases in here, tax increases in the President's proposal on small businesses—the job creators in our economy.

I would point out to my colleagues that half of all small business income is taxed at the individual level because many small businesses allow the income from that business to flow through to their individual tax return. In fact, the number of small businesses that would be impacted by his proposal employ about 35 million people in our economy. So you are talking about raising taxes on the job creators, on the people who really are employing people across this country, and that was a key element in the President's prescription for dealing with the fiscal crisis this country faces.

Another element of the President's plan was relying on this proposal that was part of the health care reform bill to squeeze provider payments under Medicare to try to wring a little more out of Medicare. He relies on an independent payment advisory board which would be empowered to go ahead and make reductions, to make cuts in provider payments. What is interesting about that is the health care reform bill last year did make some significant cuts to providers, not to reform Medicare but to create the new health care entitlement program, which, when it is fully implemented, will cost \$2.5 trillion. So that is what the President used—any savings that were achieved in Medicare last year. So when he talks