

be for a large retailer in the United States. It was over \$1 billion a year.

Does anybody believe for a moment that they are not going to do what is right by their shareholders and pay that penalty and save \$1 billion a year by dropping health care coverage? Once that dam breaks, the dam breaks.

Then do you remember that promise so often made—47 times? The President said, “If you like your plan, you are going to be able to keep it.” Well, people are not going to be able to keep it. They will lose their plans.

They certainly were not talking to Governors when they wrote this bill. Any Governor would tell us that Medicaid is a broken system. It is literally bankrupting State budgets under current circumstances. Then when we add 26 million more people to Medicaid, we begin to realize they are going to have a serious access problem.

Forty percent of doctors do not take Medicaid patients. Where are they going to find their health care? As many of us pointed out, it is like saying to someone: Here is your bus ticket, travel anywhere you want—oh, by the way, there are not enough buses to haul all the people we have given tickets to.

That is what we are going to be facing—a growing access problem. Then, with the cuts to Medicare, they sure could not have been talking to Medicare providers because when they start cutting reimbursement rates, which is exactly what they are doing with \$½ trillion cut out of Medicare, they are going to have access problems there too.

All of a sudden senior citizens cannot find a doctor. Don't believe my statement on that. Read the reports from Richard Foster, the Chief Actuary at CMS, who studied this and said these are the consequences of this legislation.

At the end of the day it is pretty clear to all of us that this is a failed policy that was quickly put together, rammed through to roll over the minority and get this done. We ended up with a very failed piece of legislation.

The American people do not like this legislation any better than the day it was passed. In fact, they like it less. The more they learn about this legislation, the less they like it.

I will wrap up with one thought. We all know the Supreme Court is hearing arguments on this case these days. It is my hope the Supreme Court will intervene and decide that this law is in fact unconstitutional, and then we can build a health care law the way it should be done—a step at a time, consulting with medical providers and Governors all across this country to build a policy that makes sense for the health care system and our citizens. That is what should have been done in the first place. That is what we need to do.

With that, I yield the floor and 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. BOOZMAN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT JERRY REED II

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, we are reading in the news about the violence in countries all around the world and are reminded about the tremendous sacrifice of American troops as they protect and preserve the interests of our Nation. These men and women serve with courage and honor and it is our duty to honor and stand for those who have stood for us.

Today, I am here to pay my respects to SSG Jerry Reed II, an Arkansas soldier who sacrificed his life for the love of his country while in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Staff Sergeant Reed graduated from Russellville High School in 2000 and enlisted in the Army. He served 4 years and then reenlisted in 2008 and served in Iraq, Germany, Korea, and Afghanistan. Staff Sergeant Reed served as a tank driver and gunner with the Army's 28th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Battalion, A Company at Grafenwoehr, Germany.

His sister Katherine, in an interview with the Russellville Courier, spoke of how he loved the military and planned to make it a career. Staff Sergeant Reed's family and friends describe him as a man who would have had no trouble fitting into the military, for he was one who faced danger head on. He was a protector and looked out for his friends. He loved being outdoors and fishing and spending time with his family.

On February 16, 2012, Staff Sergeant Reed passed away while serving in Afghanistan. Staff Sergeant Reed made the ultimate sacrifice for his country. He is a true American hero.

I ask my colleagues to keep his family and his friends in their thoughts and prayers during this very difficult time, and I humbly offer thanks to SSG Jerry Reed for his selfless service to the security and well-being of all Americans.

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. BAUCUS. 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.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, the British statesman Edmund Burke said:

All government—indeed every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue, and every prudent act—is founded on compromise and barter.

Compromise and barter. That means give-and-take in order to work things out.

I want to apply Burke's famous aphorism to the two leaders of the Environment and Public Works Committee, the chairman, Senator BARBARA BOXER of California, and the ranking member, Senator JIM INHOFE of Oklahoma—one of the Senate's leading liberals and one of the Senate's most dyed-in-the-wool conservatives.

While Senators BOXER and INHOFE openly acknowledge there is much they do not agree on, they both agree transportation infrastructure is a smart investment in America's road safety and jobs. So they worked hard to craft a consensus highway bill that three-quarters of the Senate could agree to support. I have always believed this kind of cooperation is the key to success. We can do great things for this country when we work together.

When I had the honor of leading the Environment and Public Works Committee, I also had the truly distinct pleasure of working with Senators from both parties who understood Burke's principle of barter and compromise, such as John Warner of Virginia and John Chafee of Rhode Island. So it is very gratifying to know that tradition on the Environment and Public Works Committee continues to be strongly upheld by the chairman and the ranking member today.

In working to craft the highway bill, both of these leaders faced pressures not to compromise. Each had ample opportunity to give into those pressures and give up on the bill. But instead of drawing lines in the sand and pointing fingers, they chose to reach out their hands and meet in the middle. They talked to each other and, more importantly, they listened. They opted for pragmatism over ideology. They disagreed without being disagreeable. They worked closely with Senator VITTER and myself to incorporate the best ideas from all sides. Ultimately, those good-faith efforts prevailed when the committee reported our highway bill title with unanimous support.

We continued working together to meld that product with contributions from the Banking Committee and the Commerce Committee, along with a fiscally responsible plan to pay for this investment from the Finance Committee.

Earlier this month, 75 percent of the Senate came together to pass a highway bill that will create or sustain approximately 1.8 million American jobs each year. That is according to the Department of Transportation. What a tremendous achievement reached by working together—creating or sustaining 1.8 million jobs a year. For my State of Montana, this bill will create or sustain 14,000 jobs each year, and it cuts through redtape to put people to

work on those jobs even faster. It gives the State of Montana and our local communities the flexibility they need to fund the alternative transportation projects that work best for them. It invests in the Land and Water Conservation Fund and continues a vital program to support our timber communities. It does it all without adding one single dime to the Federal deficit.

Simply put, this bill is an investment in jobs we can't afford to pass up. That is why this weekend Montana's largest newspaper, the Billings Gazette, called on the House to pass the Senate bill, and I join that call today.

The current highway bill expires at the end of this month, and the construction season is starting soon. As the Gazette notes, a short-term extension doesn't provide the certainty we need to get highway projects off the ground and workers on the job. We cannot afford to put these jobs on hold by kicking the can down the road—especially when we don't have to, and, also, especially when we don't have much more road to kick the can.

The Senate bill is the product of months of debate and cooperation, of give-and-take from all sides, carefully crafted into a bipartisan investment we can all be proud to support. It has already passed the test of overwhelmingly bipartisan support in the Senate, and there is no reason the House should not take up this bill and pass it right away.

The House should understand that we need to work together to achieve solutions upon which the American people can rely. Edmund Burke understood that. Thankfully, Senators BOXER and INHOFE clearly understand it too. I thank them for that.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, President Truman once said, "Healthy citizens constitute our greatest national resource."

Two years ago last week we passed the affordable care act. We passed it to help give every American access to quality affordable health care.

People such as Cece Whitney from Helena, MO, know exactly how much help this law provides. Doctors diagnosed Cece with cystic fibrosis by age 7. By high school she carried an oxygen tank. By the end of college she received a double lung transplant. Even with insurance coverage Cece and her family paid tens of thousands of dollars out of pocket. But things looked even worse when she hit an arbitrary coverage limit, and if she had lost her insurance before health reform she might not have been able to find any insurance coverage at all.

Insurance companies could have turned her away simply because she was born with cystic fibrosis. But now, thanks to the affordable care act, Cece will always be covered. She will always have access to the care she needs.

A year ago, on the affordable care act's first anniversary, Cece shared her

story about seeing health reform signed into law with her local newspaper. She said she cried tears—tears of extreme joy. She wrote:

I knew that I no longer had to worry about losing or being denied coverage because of my 'preexisting condition.' And I no longer was going to be denied coverage for exceeding arbitrary caps set by insurance companies.

Cece's story is not unique. Health reform is working for people in Montana and across the country, and it is saving them money. The law improved our health care system and enabled it to focus on prevention and keeping Americans healthy. We have reforms to pay for quality of care rather than quantity of services. In just 2 years, health reform has lowered costs for millions of Americans. Parents can now afford to cover their entire family, including children up to the age of 26. More than 2.5 million young adults have been able to stay on their parents' plan thanks to health reform.

Prescription drugs are now cheaper for seniors because of the act. Already more than 5 million Medicare beneficiaries have saved more than \$3 billion on drugs. Again, that is \$3 billion saved by seniors on drugs, and health reform eliminates the so-called Medicare prescription drug doughnut hole. This puts dollars back in seniors' pockets—dollars they can use for groceries or electricity bills.

Seniors now receive free annual wellness visits and free screenings. This focus on prevention leads to better health outcomes, and it keeps them healthier. It saves money by allowing seniors and their doctors to catch conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes before they become serious and costly.

Health reform also helps those who wish to retire early to afford insurance until they qualify for Medicare. The law has provided almost \$4.5 billion in aid to businesses to give early-retiree coverage to these employees. Let me repeat that. The law has provided almost \$4.5 billion in aid to businesses to enable them to give early-retiree coverage for their employees.

Health reform is also saving Americans money through new consumer protections. It is ending insurance company abuses. Medical loss ratios is one that comes to my mind. Because of health reform, parents can now keep their kids who have preexisting conditions on their plan, and insurance companies can no longer exclude these children. Insurance companies can no longer place lifetime and restrictive yearly limits on their health coverage that can cost Americans such as Cece Whitney tens of thousands of dollars, and insurance companies can no longer go back and scrutinize applications for tiny errors as a way to deny payments after a customer gets sick.

Health reform has also created the Medicare and Medicaid Innovation Center to put good ideas from the private sector into action. The center is al-

ready working with more than 7,100 organizations—hospitals, physicians, consumer groups, and employers included—to reduce costly hospital readmissions.

Health reform provides law enforcement with new tools and resources to protect Medicare and Medicaid from fraud and abuse. These efforts recovered more than \$4 billion last year. New antifraud provisions in the act, in the health care bill, helped recover more than \$4 billion in fraud last year. Just a few weeks ago, Federal agents made the largest Medicare fraud bust in U.S. history. Ninety-one people were charged with defrauding taxpayers for nearly \$300 million.

More parts of the affordable care act that will help consumers will start in the year 2014, including the State-based affordable insurance exchanges. On these exchanges people will be able to save money. How? By shopping for an insurance plan that is right for them. It is like getting on Expedia or Orbitz: you just get on and shop around and find the one that is best for you.

For too long, individuals and small businesses shopping for insurance on their own have had very limited options. The plans that were available were often too expensive. Now, for the first time, insurance companies will have to compete against each other for business on a level playing field. That will mean lower premiums, better coverage, and more choices.

Health reform has also reduced government costs by dramatically slowing the growth in spending. According to our nonpartisan scorekeeper, the Congressional Budget Office, health reform slowed the growth in health spending by 4 percent. That will save taxpayer dollars and help get our deficit problem under control.

We need to let the law keep working to save families and taxpayers more money. The Congressional Budget Office tells us that repealing the affordable care act—repealing it now—would increase the Federal deficit by nearly \$143 billion over the next decade. Repeal would cost the Federal deficit \$143 billion over the next decade according to the Congressional Budget Office, and it would increase the deficit by more than \$1 trillion in the decade after that.

Repealing health reform would also leave tens of millions of Americans without insurance. Studies have shown this would cost every American family an extra \$1,000 a year. That is something we cannot afford. The affordable care act has already saved millions of Americans money and helped them get affordable health care, and millions more will gain access in the coming years. Healthy citizens are, indeed, the greatest asset our country has. We need to let health reform keep working for all Americans.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona.