

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.

CHENEY WELL WISHES

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, first I would like to take a moment to wish Vice President Cheney well as he recovers from his big-time heart transplant surgery. My wife Caryll and I have him in our thoughts and prayers, and we send our best wishes to him and to his entire family. I am sure "the Angler," as he was called, would rather be out fishing in Wyoming on the Snake River, where I know he has been very happy. I hope he can get back out West soon. In the meantime, I know he is fortified by his wonderful family, his wife Lynn, his two daughters, and his grandchildren. We wish him all the best.

RYAN BUDGET

Mr. KYL. In a recent column in the Arizona Republic, my friend Bob Robb laid out a very thoughtful contrast between President Obama's budget and the alternative put forth by House Budget Committee chairman PAUL RYAN, which the House of Representatives will be acting on this week. In his column Robb notes that the Ryan budget would get the Federal deficit below 3 percent of GDP by 2015 and after a decade would reduce our debt-to-GDP ratio from today's 100 percent to about 87 percent or just under the share many economists believe affects private sector economic performance and casts doubt on the government's ability to even repay its obligations. Robb explains that "despite the caterwauling of critics, Ryan doesn't achieve this through brutal budget cuts. Quite the contrary." He explains why the Ryan budget would allow spending to increase about 3 percent each year, compared to the Obama budget's about 5 percent annual increases, and he concludes that low interest rates are currently muting the effects of our growing debt on the economy, but it could change overnight. "And if it changes, the federal government will have to take action much more drastic and quicker than the relatively gentle and gradual pathway provided by the Ryan budget."

I hope Senators will take a few moments to review this column in its entirety. I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Arizona Republic, Mar. 23, 2012]

RYAN HAS A LESS-PAINFUL DEBT PLAN

(By Robert Robb)

Critics of Rep. Paul Ryan's proposed budget resolution are almost universally unserious about getting federal debt and deficits under control. The country will be very lucky if it gets a chance to implement as gentle and gradual a path to fiscal sobriety as the Ryan plan outlines.

Economists believe there are two red lines for debt and deficits. If accumulated debt exceeds 90 percent of GDP, it begins to affect private-sector economic performance and raise questions about the ability of the government to pay it back. And annual deficits

of more than 3 percent of GDP are regarded as a sign of a government that has lost control of its finances.

Right now, total federal debt exceeds 100 percent of GDP. The deficit is 8.5 percent of GDP. And that's the lowest it's been in four years.

The Ryan budget would get the annual deficit below 3 percent of GDP by 2015. At the end of the 10-year planning horizon, total federal debt would be an estimated 87 percent of GDP, barely out of the red zone.

Despite the caterwauling of critics, Ryan doesn't achieve this through brutal budget cuts. Quite the contrary.

Under Ryan's budget, federal spending would increase from \$3.6 trillion today to \$4.9 trillion 10 years from now. That's an average annual rate of increase of around 3 percent. Hardly a starvation diet.

What is the alternative to Ryan's plan to get the federal government out of the red zone on debt and deficits? It certainly isn't President Barack Obama's budget.

Under Obama's budget, the annual deficit wouldn't get under 3 percent of GDP until 2017. That would mean eight consecutive years of exceeding the deficit speed limit. That's not a country in control of its finances.

Under Obama's budget, the country would never get below 100 percent of GDP in terms of total debt. After 10 years, the country would still be deep in the red zone.

Rather than increase federal spending to \$4.9 trillion over 10 years, Obama would increase it to \$5.8 trillion—or nearly 5 percent a year, compared with Ryan's 3 percent.

Obama's tax increases aren't really to reduce the deficit, as he claims. They are to support his higher rate of growth in spending.

Right now, there's not a political urgency to do something meaningful about debt and deficits because the federal government can borrow a seemingly unlimited amount of money at very low interest rates.

But that could change. And it could change overnight. And if it changes, the federal government will have to take action much more drastic and quicker than the relatively gentle and gradual pathway provided by the Ryan budget.

The most controversial parts of the Ryan budget—tax reform and Medicare reform—are actually irrelevant to the task of getting out of the red zone for debt and deficits. The tax reform is intended to be revenue-neutral. The Medicare reform doesn't kick in until after the 10-year planning horizon of the budget resolution. It's intended to reduce the debt problem of the future, not get us out of our current hole.

If Democrats were serious about doing something about debt, there would be room for discussion about changes to the Ryan blueprint. The Simpson-Bowles Commission proposed tax reform similar to what Ryan advocates, lower rates on a broader base, but in a way that increases revenues to the government. Ryan proposes spending \$440 billion more on defense over 10 years than does Obama. The relative allocations within the Ryan spending limits are certainly arguable.

But Democrats aren't serious, so the Ryan budget is the only current alternative to just waiting for the credit markets to start saying no. If that day arrives, the Ryan plan will look awfully lovely in retrospect.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, as we know, today the Supreme Court began hearing arguments about the constitutionality of the affordable care act. It is one of the most critically important

Supreme Court cases of our time. A Wall Street Journal editorial noted last Friday:

Few legal cases in the modern era are as consequential, or as defining, as the challenges to [this law]. . . . The powers that the Obama administration is claiming change the structure of the American government as it has existed for 225 years. . . . The Constitutional questions the Affordable Care Act poses are great, novel, and grave.

The editorial, entitled "Liberty and ObamaCare," lays out the constitutional problems with the affordable health care act and focuses on the bill's centerpiece: the individual mandate to purchase health insurance. As the editorial notes, the case against this provision is anchored in ample constitutional precedent, and I quote their conclusion:

The Commerce Clause that the government invokes to defend such regulation has always applied to commercial and economic transactions, not to individuals as members of society. . . . The Court has never held that the Commerce Clause is an ad hoc license for anything the government wants to do.

I urge my colleagues to read this article, and I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[The Wall Street Journal, Mar. 22, 2012]

LIBERTY AND OBAMACARE

Few legal cases in the modern era are as consequential, or as defining, as the challenges to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that the Supreme Court hears beginning Monday. The powers that the Obama Administration is claiming change the structure of the American government as it has existed for 225 years. Thus has the health-care law provoked an unprecedented and unnecessary constitutional showdown that endangers individual liberty.

It is a remarkable moment. The High Court has scheduled the longest oral arguments in nearly a half-century: five and a half hours, spread over three days. Yet Democrats, the liberal legal establishment and the press corps spent most of 2010 and 2011 deriding the government of limited and enumerated powers of Article I as a quaint artifact of the 18th century. Now even President Obama and his staff seem to grasp their constitutional gamble.

Consider a White House strategy memo that leaked this month, revealing that senior Administration officials are coordinating with liberal advocacy groups to pressure the Court. "Frame the Supreme Court oral arguments in terms of real people and real benefits that would be lost if the law were overturned," the memo notes, rather than "the individual responsibility piece of the law and the legal precedence [sic]." Those non-political details are merely what "lawyers will be talking about."

The White House is even organizing demonstrations during the proceedings, including a "prayerful witness" encircling the Supreme Court. The executive branch is supposed to speak to the Court through the Solicitor General, not agitprop and crowds in the streets.

The Supreme Court will not be ruling about matters of partisan conviction, or the President's re-election campaign, or even about health care at all. The lawsuit filed by 26 states and the National Federation of Independent Business is about the outer