

My amendment would require the approval of Congress for any regulations causing increases of our national energy bill, just like the one the EPA would create with these regulations. If these regulations are allowed to take effect, they will increase energy costs for the people who can bear the burden the least—seniors, low-income families, small businesses.

High energy costs will destroy thousands of jobs in places such as my home State of Wyoming but also in Missouri, Ohio, West Virginia, Montana, and many other States. We have already seen coal-fired powerplants shut down and reduce capacity, putting many people out of work. That has been the President's plan all along. These new regulations would be the latest step.

Remember, President Obama said that under his plan "electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket." Skyrocket. That is his word, not mine. He said energy producers could still build coal-fired powerplants, but that the cost would be so high it would bankrupt them. The President should be looking for ways to help businesses grow, to help create jobs, not pushing his regulations to find backdoor ways to bankrupt them.

My amendment accomplishes a number of goals, beginning with protecting American jobs. That has been our focus in this difficult economy. The Nation's recession ended more than 4 years ago. We have not had the recovery, though, we should have had because the President's policies have failed. The President promised he had a plan to create so-called green jobs. People have seen that those green jobs never materialized.

Now the President is going after the red, white, and blue jobs that continue to power our country. The Obama administration and its allies in the fringe environmental movement say we need to get rid of those jobs to make way for new ones. They say coal miners and powerplant workers should fade into history along with the men and women who built stagecoaches, telegraphs, and record players. Their idea is that if we simply let coal die, those folks can start making something new.

That kind of thinking is a luxury a lot of Americans do not want and cannot afford. When excessive Washington redtape crushes a coal mine or a coal-fired powerplant in a small community, those jobs are not the only thing that go. The town loses its revenue base. That hurts its public schools, its police, its fire departments, senior bus services for those who cannot drive. Everything that town does to serve its people suffers because of decisions made by this administration in Washington, DC.

Before long, people start to move away, looking for a better chance somewhere else. Small businesses do not have enough customers, so they shut down, and the town withers away. When Washington uses the heavy hand

of excessive regulation, there are a whole host of ways it hurts American communities. One of those ways is its impact on public health.

Studies consistently show unemployment increases the likelihood of illness, hospital visits, and premature death. Families where a parent is out of work are more likely to fall into poverty. Children in poor families are four times as likely as other children to be in fair or poor health.

The bureaucrats at the EPA can shake their magic eight ball to predict health impacts of carbon pollution on virtual people who have not been born yet, years into the future. But if their predictions are wrong, and I expect they are, they will simply shake their magic eight ball again.

Meanwhile, the health effects caused by their excessive regulations are very real for real families, real children, real seniors. My amendment addresses this public health issue. It does it by preventing this massive unemployment that would result from new redtape and higher energy costs.

Finally, my amendment is clear that Congress should act on an affordable energy plan. Nothing in my amendment says Congress should not work with State and local governments to protect communities from severe weather events where lives are at stake. My amendment is clear that these kinds of decisions should be for Congress to make, not for the President to make on his own. That is true whether the President is a Democrat or a Republican. I hope to get a vote on my amendment to ensure that the Obama administration does not impose an increase in our national energy bill on the American people.

Along the same lines, I want to speak briefly about another opportunity we have to ensure a stronger energy future for our country. This week will mark an anniversary that I hope will spur the American people to demand some action from the Obama administration. Five full years ago TransCanada first applied for permission to build the Keystone XL Pipeline. President Obama still cannot make up his mind to approve the permits. He dithers, he delays, he makes excuses.

It is time to act. It is time finally to approve the Keystone XL Pipeline so America can start to get the benefits of this important energy project.

According to the State Department analysis, the pipeline's construction could support 42,000 jobs across the country. The President should be grabbing any opportunity he can to help the private sector create jobs. Instead, he says the jobs the Keystone XL Pipeline would create are "a blip relative to the need." Is this how the President sees the livelihoods of 42,000 American families, a blip?

This is the fourth major pipeline project between Canada and the United States since 2006. All the others were approved and the process took between 15 and 28 months for each of them. The

permit process for Keystone XL is now 60 months and still counting. Why is it taking so long? In October 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said her department was "inclined" to approve the project. In July 2011, the administration said it was "publicly committed to reaching a decision" before the end of the year. That was 2011. The deadline came and it went.

This past June, the President suddenly raised the bar. He said the "net effects of the pipeline's impacts on our climate will be absolutely critical" in his decision. We know today what those effects would be. Studies show the Keystone XL Pipeline would not have a substantial impact on greenhouse gas emissions. That is because even if the pipeline does not get built, the energy is still going to be developed. China has absolutely offered to buy the energy from Canada. This pipeline has the support of more than 70 percent of the American people. It has the support of major labor unions, of every State along its route.

A bipartisan majority in the House and 62 Senators support it. Still, President Obama cannot make up his mind. He delays his decisions on this vital infrastructure project and at the same time orders regulations that would impose what amounts to a national energy tax. He stalls a pipeline that would create thousands of jobs and at the same time orders regulations that would destroy thousands of jobs. He stalls a pipeline that would help middle-class families while he promotes a policy that would take more money out of the pockets of hard-working Americans. We need to improve America's energy picture, without destroying jobs or bankrupting our country.

President Obama can help do that. He can do it today by doing two things. First, he should drop his plan to impose a new increase on national energy costs and let it be debated by Congress. Second, he should immediately approve the Keystone XL Pipeline. If the President is serious about helping middle-class families, he will prove it. If he is not ready to join Democrats and Republicans in Congress in making reasonable energy policies that help American families, then the Senate should act.

Struggling middle-class families are asking for our help. It is time to give them the help they need.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes.

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

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the Affordable Care Act. At home in Hawaii we have a saying, "Lucky you live Hawaii." That can

mean a lot of different things to different people, but when talking about access to affordable, effective care, this phrase has particular meaning.

In the early 1970s, the rate of uninsured in our State was about 30 percent, meaning roughly 1 in 3 in our population would live in fear that sickness or injury could cause financial ruin for themselves or their families. The people of Hawaii knew this was unacceptable.

In 1974, the State government passed an innovative piece of legislation, the Prepaid Health Care Act. Now simply known as Prepaid, this legislation requires employers to provide affordable and quality care for hundreds of thousands of individuals and their families.

Our uninsured rate is one of the lowest in the country, with only 8 percent of our population lacking any type of insurance. Even though Hawaii has been at the forefront in making health care a right and not a privilege, we still have a way to go. Even with Prepaid, there are more than 100,000 people in our State still uninsured.

When the Affordable Care Act passed 3 years ago, I knew it meant that those who are uninsured or underinsured in Hawaii would find some relief. We have already seen major successes since this landmark legislation passed.

Yet people are still afraid of ObamaCare. This is because a lot of people have spent a lot of time and money to make the American public believe that somehow this legislation is bad for them and will harm them. That is why, when asked about health care reform as a whole, many Americans say they are concerned, they have anxiety. But when you talk to people back in Hawaii and across the Nation, and even those who think they don't like health care reform, they like what it does.

For example, parents like that they can keep their children on their health insurance until the age of 26, which affects 6,000 young adults in the State of Hawaii. People will no longer have to live in fear of lifetime limits on health benefits, which will help more than 460,000 residents of Hawaii, including 115,000 children. More than half a million people in my State will no longer have to worry about being denied coverage because of a pre-existing condition.

As a State that has committed to Medicaid expansion, Hawaii will also now be able to provide care to close to more than 68,000 residents starting in 2014.

People like these policies. People like what health care reform is already doing for them.

While my colleagues across the aisle are looking to repeal this historic legislation, I am looking forward to how we can build on its success.

Let me be clear. The fact that health care reform is working is exactly why the detractors of the ACA are trying so hard to stop it from being fully implemented. They know the American people

are embracing ObamaCare because of all the good it will do for our families.

In particular, I am looking forward to the opening of our marketplace, the Hawaii Health Connector, on October 1. Many of the people I have spoken to want to know what the marketplace may mean for them. Simply, the Hawaii Health Connector is going to provide a consumer-friendly way for residents of my State to view and compare a wide variety of plans. Then they will be able to pick the coverage that best suits them and their families. My office has been in constant contact with the Connector, and their staff in Hawaii has been working tirelessly to set up the online and phone interface, and to provide assistance and navigation in the form of *kokua*, a word in Hawaiian that essentially means pitching in to help your neighbors and your community with no regard for personal gain.

This is reflective of the values we have in Hawaii, that everyone deserves to be healthy and have access to affordable and quality care. That doesn't mean we still don't have a lot of work to do.

I am hoping a number of bills I have introduced, including the Rural Preventive Health Care Training Act and the Strengthening Health Disparities Data Collection Act, will be considered and voted on by the full Senate in order to solve some of our worst issues in providing care to rural and underserved populations in Hawaii and across the Nation.

I believe ACA is working the way it should be. It is increasing the number of insured Americans, promoting preventive care that will help to reduce the human and financial costs of avoidable illness and lowering the costs of care for everyone.

Many of my colleagues in Congress choose not to see any of this. The only option for them is total repeal, with zero tolerance for open discussion or compromise on this landmark legislation, but that kind of thinking is what causes the gridlock Americans are so tired of. I understand there will be parts of this law, which is a sweeping piece of legislation, that will need to be amended over time to resolve any kinks. These kinds of revisions have been done with every other landmark domestic social policy that has been passed in this country, including Medicare and Social Security.

I am willing, as are my colleagues on the Democratic side, to come to the table and work with Republicans to make necessary improvements over time, but I refuse to engage in the process of political and parliamentary gymnastics designed to score small, short-term wins at the expense of the American people and the economy.

It must be pointed out that anyone who wants to grind the entire government to a halt over the implementation of this several-years-old law will cause harm to the economy and harm to their communities, because Federal

funding provides essential services and programs to constituents in every State and every county in every district. If improvements or changes need to be made, they can be done through the regular order with hearings, serious discussions, and bipartisan support. Ultimately, what we are seeing in Hawaii and across the Nation is President Obama's historic health care package is making inroads in improving our health care system. Efforts to stop that cannot be tolerated by Members of Congress and the people of this Nation.

I will continue to support its full implementation and look forward to working with all of my colleagues in the Senate to build upon its success.

I yield the floor and 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. MARKEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MARKEY. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

A MASSACHUSETTS PERSPECTIVE

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, today I am here to give my first speech on the floor of the Senate. I do so with deep respect and reverence for the history of this Chamber and for the giants of the Senate who have served before us. From Massachusetts, our recent roster of Senators reads like a history textbook: President John F. Kennedy, who inspired a Nation—President Kennedy's desk is right here, and it is so appropriate that my extraordinary partner from Massachusetts, Senator WARREN, occupies it today—the legendary Ted Kennedy—he had the vision to make health care a right and not a privilege; Ed Brooke, the first African-American popularly elected to the Senate; Paul Tsongas, a model of independence; for 28 years John Kerry was a champion for the people of Massachusetts. Now he is our chief diplomat to the world, his skill already shown in his ability to bring Russia and Syria to the negotiating table.

America is the greatest country on Earth.

My father drove a truck for the Hood Milk Company. He graduated from the vocational program at Lawrence High School. My mother was going to be senior class president in high school, but her mother died when she was a junior. She had to abandon her college dreams to stay home and take care of her younger sisters.

That was before the New Deal, before Social Security, and before Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In those days the