

Two weeks ago I introduced legislation to do exactly what I am talking about—the North Atlantic Energy Security Act. The cosponsors include Senator MCCAIN, Senator BARRASSO, and Senator MURKOWSKI, who is the ranking member on the energy committee. Senator BARRASSO worked to put a lot of the legislation together. Senator MCCAIN has always been very active in the Ukrainian situation. Together we put together this bill with a lot of pieces of this legislation that have already been passed in the House—already passed the House. Quite simply, it will enable us to produce more natural gas, move it to market, and export it to our allies. It increases onshore production of natural gas. It allows us to gather it and move it to market, and it allows it to be exported.

Quite simply, what does that enable us to do? Well, States such as mine today are flaring off, burning off \$1.5 million a day of natural gas because we don't have a market for it. So we just burn it. We just burn it because we can't get the kind of legislation we have developed passed. We can't get it to the floor for a vote. So instead of taking that natural gas—millions of dollars a day—that is going up in smoke and moving it down to these facilities and over to our allies, we are burning it.

It would be better for our economy. It would create jobs. It would be better for our environment. It would create jobs. It would certainly be better for our economic growth. It would create revenues to deal with the debt and deficit without raising taxes—just through economic growth. It would make a big difference for the national security of our country and our allies. It is common sense. What are we waiting for? Let's get beyond just talking about what needs to be done in Ukraine and let's get going. Let's get going with a long-term strategy.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. I ask unanimous consent to speak for 5 minutes.

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I wish to subscribe to the views of my colleague from North Dakota on the importance of developing our great resource of natural gas and turning it into a liquefied form and solving a lot of the problems we face around the world. I also commend Senator HOEVEN and Senator WYDEN for the exchange they had briefly a few moments ago on a bipartisan approach to funding our infrastructure problems in the immediate and in the long-term sense.

I note, as I move to the topic of ObamaCare, the absence of any such bipartisan accord during 2009 when the Affordable Care Act was being debated

in the Senate. Thus, we have what in April of 2003 Senate Finance Committee Chairman Baucus called a huge train wreck. He was right in seeing the train wreck coming on the rollout of the Web site, but it also has turned out to be a train wreck in far more ways than the Web site glitches and the ultimate fiasco.

The train wreck of the affordable health care act continues in the way the law is affecting health care coverage and the way it is affecting the pocketbooks of American families. These families were flatly told their health care premiums would go down. They were not told their health care premiums would moderate; they were told their health care premiums would go down. Instead, we have all of the problems we are facing with regard to ObamaCare in the way it affects women, in the way it affects wage-earners, and in the way it affects people who are looking for full-time employment. Frankly, the ObamaCare law continues to drag down our economy and our chances for economic growth.

Instead of seeing premiums drop by \$2,500 on average each year as President Obama promised, families and individuals are spending more of their hard-earned dollars on health care costs under this so-called Affordable Care Act. The sticker shock will only worsen, and it is going to happen right around the corner.

In recent weeks several States have announced preliminary estimates for next year's premiums. The Wall Street Journal reports that many of these States' largest health insurers plan to increase premiums by between 8.5 percent and 22.8 percent. These are annual increases coming up right around the corner of 8.5 percent up to 22.8 percent. For many Americans, this means either paying a lot more or simply not being able to have coverage at all. The administration is trying to downplay the costs, but it is clear that once again ObamaCare is failing to live up to its billing.

Some States are particularly vulnerable to higher rates next year because of low enrollment among young adults or because few insurers have joined the exchanges. For example, in my home State of Mississippi 94 percent of enrollees are eligible for Federal subsidies, which means we have little competition to drive down rates. According to this year's numbers, my home State of Mississippi already has the third highest premiums in the Nation, and we can't afford them. Competition cannot flourish when the government is involved in setting mandates for benefits and controlling rates. Without a market-based approach, which I advocated in 2009, consumers lose out on choice and cost.

Particularly hardhit by the President's health care law are women and younger wage earners. With regard to women, for example, they are more likely to pay higher out-of-pocket costs under ObamaCare with plans with

high deductibles because they typically visit the doctor more. As 57 percent of the part-time workforce, women are also more likely to have their hours cut because of the employer mandate.

I note that the employer mandate is increasingly unpopular among Democrats and Republicans.

Additionally, the law's limited physician networks have forced many women to choose different specialists for themselves and their children, thus making it less convenient for these women to get care for themselves and their children.

Stories from women across the country underscore these difficult realities. Last year a woman from Columbus, MS, wrote to tell me that her original health care plan was \$500 per month before it jumped to \$1,500 a month because of the ACA.

One woman from North Carolina gave this reaction to unaffordable premiums. She said:

I've never worked this hard in my life. But I'm gonna continue working every day and keep hitting the books at night. I'm just trying to keep my head above water.

Another woman from Texas who could not find an obstetrician who would accept her insurance said this:

It was mind-numbing, because I was just sitting there thinking, I'm paying close to \$400 just for me to have insurance that doesn't work. So what am I paying for?

Women make approximately 80 percent of the health care decisions in America. More choices and lower costs would give them the flexibility they need to get the right insurance plan.

With regard to younger workers, they are generally healthier but earn less, and they are faced with daunting realities because of the health care law. Specifically, younger workers are forced to pay higher premiums to subsidize coverage for older Americans.

I was contacted by a constituent from Greenville, MS, whose healthy 27-year-old son lost his health insurance because of ObamaCare. The cost of his coverage went from \$70 per month to nearly \$350 per month even though the benefits improved only slightly. Although this young man had health insurance for 7 years, since he was 20 years of age, he is now questioning whether he can afford it.

Finally, all Americans are affected by a health care law that destroys jobs. Last month the economy added 288,000 jobs, but only a fraction of them were full time, as we know. The Obama economy is a part-time economy. Millions of Americans want full-time work.

The President's health care law was pushed through with no bipartisan input and in defiance of public opinion. After the Massachusetts special election, this Senate should have gotten the message that we needed to regroup and rethink this disastrous law, but the majority party pushed forward regardless. So it is no surprise that the law remains deeply unpopular today. According to a recent poll, 55 percent

of Americans wish it had never passed and 44 percent said America is now worse off because of the ACA.

In summary, under the affordable health care act women are worse off, younger workers are worse off, and people seeking full-time jobs are worse off.

Elections have consequences, and November will be no different. The American people have an opportunity to change the course of this disastrous law in 106 days.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 5 minutes.

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

HELSINKI COMMISSION

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I have the honor to chair the U.S. Helsinki Commission, which is well known for its commitment to human rights. It is also our participating arm in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the OSCE.

Starting when I first joined the Helsinki Commission almost 20 years ago, I worked on the issues of antisemitism and trying to deal with combating antisemitism. This is overt actions against Jews and Jewish institutions, which were on the rise. We tried to do something about it. In the early 2000s, working with Congressman HOYER and Congressman HASTINGS and Congressman SMITH and others, we made a commitment in the Helsinki Commission to bring up the increasing episodes of antisemitism and what we needed to do about it.

We saw increased episodes of violence against Jews and Jewish institutions. We saw that world events were used to try to justify antisemitic activities. As a result of the work of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, the OSCE determined that it was important enough to do a special conference on antisemitism. In 2004, we had the Berlin conference on antisemitism under the leadership of the United States and Germany.

I was proud to be a member of the U.S. delegation to the Berlin conference. Good work was done in that conference. We developed best practices, from dealing with Holocaust education, to police training to deal with identifying hate crimes. We had the first uniform collection of hate crimes statistics in the OSCE region, the responsibility of leaders to speak up against antisemitic activities. We provided technical assistance to countries to deal with antisemitism and to share their best practices. We also recommended a special representative to the chair in office, to put a spotlight on antisemitism and ways to combat it.

Today Rabbi Andrew Baker is that special representative to the chair in

office. The chair in office this year is the Swiss chair in office.

Tomorrow, I will chair a Helsinki Commission hearing that deals with antisemitism, racism, and discrimination in the OSCE region. There are now three special representatives, one to combat antisemitism, one to deal with discrimination against Muslims, and one to deal with racism, xenophobia, and other forms of religious intolerance. They are all related. We find that hate crimes are hate crimes; that if a community is susceptible to antisemitic activities, it is also susceptible to anti-Muslim activities or activities against a person because of their race.

There is reason to be concerned. There is reason to be concerned about the rise of antisemitism today. This is 10 years after the Berlin conference. Last year the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency surveyed all of the EU countries. The results were alarming. Forty to forty-eight percent of the Jewish respondents felt it was not safe for them to remain in their country. We are talking about in Hungary, France, and Belgium. In those three countries, ranging between 40 and 48 percent, they were considering emigrating to Israel because they did not feel safe in their own country.

These fears are not without justification. The Anti-Defamation League surveyed over 100 countries and documented persistent antisemitic prejudice. In the EU elections extremist parties espousing antisemitic activities made remarkable progress. In Hungary and Greece extremist parliamentary parties associated with street militias were successful in elections.

In Hungary the extremist party Jobbik is the second most significant party and had erected a monument to a wartime leader and a self-declared antisemite. We also found laws passed in Europe that make it more difficult for Jews to practice their religion because of restrictions on being able to make kosher foods and making it difficult to wear head coverings.

We have seen, unfortunately, violent acts. In Kansas, in the United States, three people were murdered outside of a JCC. In May, in Brussels, three people were murdered at a Jewish museum. I mention this because even as we visit Europe today, we see signs of antisemitism. It is troubling to all of us.

This is the 10th anniversary of the Berlin conference coming up this year. We will be reconvening the OSCE states in order to evaluate the progress we have made over the last 10 years and additional progress that needs to be made. The Helsinki hearing tomorrow will give us an opportunity to concentrate on how the United States can continue to be a leader on this very important issue.

I wanted to share those comments with my colleagues.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

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

CARNES NOMINATION

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, in a few moments the Senate will be called upon to confirm the nomination of the Honorable Julie Carnes to the 11th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Georgia. I stand, along with my colleague Senator SAXBY CHAMBLISS, the senior Senator from Georgia, to commend Ms. Carnes to the entire body as an outstanding appointment.

I thank the President. Senator CHAMBLISS and I recommended Ms. Carnes when the openings took place on the 11th Circuit Court. He, with the advice of Kathy Ruemmler, his able assistant in the judicial part of his advisory board, brought the nomination forward to the Judiciary Committee of the Senate. I thank PAT LEAHY, the Senator from Vermont, the chairman of that committee, and CHUCK GRASSLEY from Iowa, the ranking member of that committee, for doing a judicious hearing, for giving all sides a chance to be heard, and for commending unanimously, on a voice vote, Julie Carnes to the Senate.

I am not going to talk for a long time, but I want to make a couple of very special points. Julie Carnes is a very special lady. For 22 years she has been a judge for the Northern District of Georgia, and the last 5 years she has been the senior judge. Before that she was on advisory panels for judicial sentencing and many other technical and judicial issues.

Her nomination is the nomination of someone with immense capacity, outstanding integrity, and outstanding ability. She is just the type of person the Presiding Officer and I would want to go to the bench. She is, as we call them in Georgia, a "double dog." She graduated from the University of Georgia with her undergraduate degree and got her juris doctor degree from University of Georgia Law School, whose emblem is a bulldog. We call her a "Double dog." She is an outstanding individual and will be an outstanding judge on the bench.

But there is a point of personal privilege I want to take for a minute. Up in heaven right now, at a sunset, Charlie Carnes is looking down, about to see his daughter Julie confirmed to the United States 11th Circuit Court.

Charlie Carnes was my mentor in the Georgia General Assembly for 12 years before he was appointed to be a State court judge in Fulton County, the largest county in the State of Georgia. Charlie is looking down on the daughter he is so proud of, and he is so proud that she is going to be confirmed by the Senate to one of the highest court appointments she could possibly achieve.

She is a chip off the old block. She is proof that an apple does not fall far