

Senate's time to have a vote on a motion to proceed and a waste of time afterward. . . . I doubt there will be problems on my side," the Democratic leader said. "If there are, I will work to clear them." I was very appreciative of my good friend making that statement after examining this bipartisan legislation.

This bipartisan human rights bill may not be that long, but it is critical to helping lift innocent victims out of the shadows.

A broad coalition—everyone from the NAACP to the National Domestic Violence Hotline—has called it "vital."

They wrote:

The [Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act] provides unprecedented support to domestic victims of trafficking who are too often invisible and underserved.

They continued:

As leaders in the anti-trafficking, anti-violence, child welfare, civil rights, runaway and homeless youth, and human rights movements, we urge Congress to pass this critical piece of legislation.

So I would urge Members on both sides of the aisle to help pass this transparent and bipartisan human rights legislation overwhelmingly.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE SUBSIDIES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, around the country we see a number of stories appearing. I will take one of the stories from the New York Times and read just a little bit of it. It is a long article, but everyone gets the drift of it. There are a few paragraphs I am going to read.

The Obama administration said Tuesday that 11.7 million Americans now have private health insurance through federal and state marketplaces, with 86 percent of them receiving financial assistance from the federal government to help pay premiums.

About three-fourths of people with marketplace coverage—8.8 million consumers—live in the 37 states served by HealthCare.gov, the website for the federal insurance exchange. The other 2.9 million people are in states that created and operate their own exchanges.

Sylvia Mathews Burwell, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, underlined the importance of subsidies for people in states using the federal exchange—subsidies that could be withdrawn if the Supreme Court rules against the Obama administration in a pending case.

Administration officials suggested that more than 7 million people could lose subsidies, making insurance unaffordable, if the court ruled that such assistance was unavailable in the federal exchange. The plaintiffs contend that the Affordable Care Act does not allow subsidies in the federal exchange.

In Florida, nearly 1.6 million people have selected or been automatically re-enrolled in health plans—the largest enrollment of any state in the federal exchange—and 1.5 million of them qualified for subsidies in the form of tax credits, which averaged \$294 a month.

In Texas, 1.2 million people selected or were re-enrolled in health plans, and one million of them qualified for financial assistance averaging \$239 a month.

In North Carolina, 560,400 people selected health plans in the federal marketplace, and 515,500 of them qualified for subsidies averaging \$315 a month.

A lot rides on what the Supreme Court does, affecting millions and millions of people. If the Supreme Court can't see the absolute clear language of that bill, millions of people will lose their health insurance, and that would be a tragedy. It would be so very bad if suddenly people find themselves with no health insurance after they waited for so long to get it.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, an ancient Greek philosopher once said, "To be doing good deeds is man's most glorious task."

Today the Senate has an opportunity to do a good deed. We have a chance to do something to address human trafficking. It is hard to fathom that in the 21st century, slavery continues to rear its ugly head in the form of human trafficking. But in the shadows of American society, there are children, women, and men who are literally being enslaved and subjected to the most shockingly inhumane treatment imaginable. The victims of human trafficking suffer physical and sexual abuse and violence. Forced to live in squalor, they have no hope. This legislation before this body aims to change that. It seeks to not only prevent trafficking but also gives survivors hope for a new life.

This legislation creates a domestic trafficking victims fund that will help support victims of trafficking and child pornography get back on their feet by providing housing, job training, and other support services. This legislation provides funding to train law enforcement in rescuing and supporting survivors of human trafficking and effectively prosecuting traffickers. It officially designates child pornography as a form of human trafficking and ensures that victims have direct access to child advocacy centers. It protects victims and witnesses by treating suspected human traffickers as violent criminals. It keeps victims of trafficking and child pornography informed regarding any plea bargain or deferred prosecution related to their cases.

This legislation is good for our country. It will go a long way in curbing human trafficking and child pornography. That is why it is supported by 200 law enforcement and victims' rights groups nationwide.

Unfortunately, Republicans are committed to turning a bipartisan bill into an unrelated and unconscionable political fight. We can give all the speeches out here we want saying somebody should have read the bill more closely.

The question is—and we can have all kinds of debates out here as to how it got in the bill. A number of people feel it was by a little bit of sleight of hand and that it shouldn't be in there. In this legislation that is meant as an outline to stop child trafficking and human trafficking generally, there is a provision dealing with abortion. It has nothing—nothing—to do with this.

I served in the House of Representatives with a very fine man. He has had his name affixed to an anti-abortion bill—anti-abortion legislation for almost three decades, and it has been continued year after year in appropriations bills. What I am talking about, what is happening in this legislation, it would make it permanent. It is wrong.

If my friend the Republican leader is so in tune with getting this passed, take that provision out of the bill; otherwise, it will not pass. Take it out.

It is unfortunate that Republicans are committed to turning a bipartisan bill into an unrelated, unconscionable political fight. Is it worth it? Is it really worth endangering a piece of legislation that would do good for our country?

Democrats will not allow a bill to prevent human trafficking and child pornography to be hijacked by a Republican ploy. We can do a lot of good with this legislation, and I hope my Republican friends will choose to do the right thing and take this out of this legislation and pass this bill without any gimmicks.

LETTER SENT TO IRAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, talking about gimmicks, there have been a number of reports in the press in the last couple of days about how this unprecedented letter to the leaders of the Iranian regime originated. We know 47 Republican Senators signed it. There are news accounts reporting that this was intended as a big joke. A big joke? Others say Republicans say it was a political organizing exercise after being hammered so hard with their non-funding of Homeland Security. Others say it was simply designed to sabotage negotiations. Pick whatever one of the three you want. Whatever the reason, one thing is clear: This is not a joke; this is not an organizing exercise; this is about Iran getting a nuclear weapon.

I am disappointed that so many of my Republican colleagues are destroying the long tradition of bipartisanship in defending Israel and stopping Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. I am heartened that a few Republicans—seven to be exact—didn't sign the letter. That is nice. Seven out of 54 didn't sign the letter. Seven is certainly better than nothing.

As some of the seven Republican Senators have said, they agree with Democrats that this letter was not appropriate. We are witnessing a fundamental test of Republicans' ability to govern. They are treating nuclear negotiations as a chance to play games—

political games. They are treating a human trafficking bill as a chance to play some of these games. This is not the time for games. Republicans' behavior on these issues is irresponsible and beneath the dignity of this institution. We can and should do better.

Mr. President, what is the business of the day?

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided. The Democrats will control the first half and the majority will control the final half.

The assistant minority leader.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week I had an opportunity to cross the street into the Supreme Court, and I witnessed the first oral argument I have ever seen. It was a historic moment for me and for our Nation because it was a moment for the Court to argue about the Affordable Care Act and the intention of Congress when it was creating this Affordable Care Act.

Having been here at the time it was debated and having voted for it, it was interesting to hear arguments made on the floor of the Supreme Court that suggested something we had never intended. The exchanges that were created under the Affordable Care Act are exchanges created by each State or Federal exchanges. There was never a distinction made in the debate nor any intention that the subsidy given to those who bought insurance in these exchanges would be different if the exchanges were State-created or federally created, and that is basically the argument before the Supreme Court.

One can only imagine what the final decision of the Supreme Court will be, but we know it is critically important to millions of Americans. In the past year alone, 10 million uninsured Americans finally have insurance because of the Affordable Care Act. In the private market, millions more now have access to expanded coverage for preventive health services, such as a mammogram or a flu shot, without any cost sharing. Because of the Affordable Care Act, a person no longer needs to stay in a job simply to carry health insurance or be denied coverage because of a pre-existing condition—a situation which virtually every family faces. And because of this law, prescription drugs for seniors cost less.

Last week, when the Supreme Court heard arguments in *King v. Burwell*,

the plaintiffs made an argument that those who were governed by Federal exchanges were supposed to be treated differently under this act. That was never the intention of those of us who were part of the creation and voting for this legislation.

A ruling in favor of King would change this provision as we intended it. It would mean 8 million Americans would no longer be able to afford health insurance.

According to the Urban Institute, premiums for people able to purchase insurance would increase by 35 percent. I can't imagine that even Senators who voted against this bill are cheering at the prospect that 8 million Americans would lose insurance and many others would face higher premiums.

Well, the Republicans have argued they have an alternative to the Affordable Care Act in the Senate. They put out a draft proposal last month. The chairman of the Ways and Means Committee in the House said he was going to release his own plan.

The Affordable Care Act puts families in charge of their care instead of insurance companies. It expands health care coverage and lowers health care costs, makes Medicare stronger, and lowers the deficit.

What part of that do my Republican colleagues disagree with?

Before the enactment of the Affordable Care Act, 50 million Americans lacked health insurance while health care costs for working families and small businesses were increasing by double digits. The Affordable Care Act changed all of that. Ten million people now have private health insurance, millions more are covered by Medicaid, and for the first time ever insurance companies have to live up to their promise of being there when you actually need them.

The Senate Republican proposal falls short. It would allow insurance companies once again to charge higher premiums to women, to decide that people with preexisting conditions will not get any coverage at all, and to decide that certain individuals will only get so much help for paying their bills. If Republicans have their way, insurance companies will get to decide again whether you can renew your health insurance policy as you become older. Worse yet, under the Republican proposal, 12 million people would lose their health insurance and taxes on working families would go up. That is not right.

The Supreme Court would put in jeopardy health insurance coverage for Ariana Jimenez. She lives in Chicago and works part time as a nursing assistant at a community health center. Ariana pays \$52 a month for her health insurance premium. When asked what would happen to her coverage if the Supreme Court took away the tax credit, she simply said: "I wouldn't be able to afford it."

In Illinois over 800,000 people now have health insurance. Over 290,000 peo-

ple purchased their plan through the Illinois marketplace, which is a Federal marketplace. An additional 530,000 people have enrolled in Medicaid, and 125,000 young adults in Illinois can still stay on their parents' health insurance plan.

Since September 2010, children under the age of 18 enrolled in the employer-based or marketplace plan have been eligible to receive vaccinations for diseases such as measles without any cost sharing.

A few years ago Domingo Carino found out he had a health condition that required medication he couldn't afford. Thanks to the Affordable Care Act and to some help from staff at the Asian Human Services Family Health Center in Chicago, Domingo found good health insurance that only costs him \$11 a month. Domingo's plan not only allows him to afford the medication he desperately needs, but he is also able to keep his current primary care physician. According to Domingo, he can now live without worrying about how to afford his medication.

For Domingo and millions like him the tax credits provided by the Affordable Care Act are a lifesaver. If those who oppose the Affordable Care Act prevail in the Supreme Court, that tax subsidy, or tax credit, will not be available to Domingo.

Over 54 million people also benefit from Medicaid. Before the Affordable Care Act, two out of three people on Medicaid were pregnant women and children. That is 36 million vulnerable Americans. Medicaid also provides for people with disabilities.

Before the Affordable Care Act, almost 3 million people were covered by Medicaid in Illinois. More than half a million births were covered by Medicaid in Illinois, too. Since the Affordable Care Act was signed into law, another 290,000 people in Illinois are covered by Medicaid. That means these people finally get better from a condition they could not afford to treat. That is a success story.

The new Republican plan uses something else out of an old playbook. Republicans want to cap Medicaid spending for each beneficiary. This budget gimmick would hurt the most vulnerable people in America—low-income seniors, people with disabilities, children, and pregnant mothers. States would be forced to make harsh choices on what they would cover and what they would not cover.

Is that what America wants?

According to a recent Gallup poll, the uninsured rate dropped 3.5 points from 2013 to 2014. In Illinois the uninsured rate dropped 4.5 percent in the same period of time.

The Affordable Care Act includes changes meant to help slow the growth in health care costs, and they are working. We need to stick with the Affordable Care Act.