

women. What did it do? It applied to the FDA for 7 years of exclusive coverage under the Orphan Drug Act and changed the name from 17P to Makena. That is it. They proposed raising the price by almost 15 percent overnight. It was a \$10 drug initially—\$10, taken 20 times, so it cost about \$200 for the regimen, and they raised the price to \$30,000. Imagine that.

We have thousands of pregnant women who have had a history of preterm births, and their doctors say to these women: You should take this compound, this progesterone, P17. The cost is only \$200. You will get a shot every week for 20 weeks in a row.

Then all of a sudden the price of \$200 is raised to \$30,000. What happens? Some places, Medicaid won't pay. Other places, private insurance won't pay. In many cases, women simply wouldn't take this progesterone, and the problems of low birth weight babies increases.

The potentially devastating impact on our country is already too high for the preterm birth rate. Fewer women are able to afford the drug. When that happened 4 years ago, I wrote to the company's CEO asking them to consider the price increase. The senior Senator from Minnesota, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and I sent a letter to the FTC urging an investigation. Together, we kept the pressure on the company. Frankly, we embarrassed them, as they deserved. So far the drug has stayed more affordable. We need to do the same thing today. Valeant and companies like it must not be allowed to get away with fleecing consumers and taxpayers.

I am calling on my colleagues on the HELP Committee to hold hearings on this price-gouging. We must work together—Congress, the media, the public—to expose this kind of behavior, maybe a little shame. I don't normally like to do that, but when a CEO makes this kind of money by fleecing so many people—especially when it comes to low birth weight babies but also where people need these moderately priced drugs to stay alive—I think it is time to out them and put pressure on these companies.

One thing we can also do, if my colleagues would wean themselves off of drug company contributions, is give Medicare the authority to negotiate drug prices. Many of these drugs with massive price increases are taken by large numbers of seniors who are on Medicare. We know the Veterans Administration uses the buying power of millions of American veterans to negotiate directly with drug companies to bring down significantly the cost of these drugs. For too long the pharmaceutical companies have profited off of their ability to charge more vulnerable Medicare beneficiaries higher prices for their drugs. Current law expressly bans Medicare from negotiating with pharmaceutical companies—again showing the power of drug companies lobbying my colleagues in this body—even

though the government can negotiate bigger discounts with private insurance companies.

This summer I helped introduce the Medicare Prescription Drug Savings and Choice Act, which would allow seniors to enroll in a Medicare Part D plan administered directly by Medicare instead of a private insurance company. This legislation requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate directly with drug companies to get the best prices for our seniors. Seniors should be able to get drug coverage directly through Medicare and not be forced to buy from a middleman.

The purpose of lifesaving drugs is that—to save lives, not to line the pockets of Big Pharma executives and investors. We owe it to the people we serve—the people who elect us—to put a stop to the price-gouging that is bankrupting patients and overcharging Medicare, straining hospitals, and fleecing taxpayers.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

WOMEN'S SMALL BUSINESS OWNERSHIP ACT OF 2015

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I have introduced, along with Senator VITTER and Senator SHAHEEN, a bill that we believe will help break the glass ceiling women entrepreneurs face in this country.

This month is National Women's Small Business Month. Throughout the month, the important contributions women entrepreneurs make to keep the economy growing will be highlighted. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, SBA, women-owned businesses are growing three times faster than their counterparts. Today, there are more than 10 million women-owned businesses across our country. They provide more than 23 million jobs and are expected to provide another five million additional jobs by 2018. In addition, one-third of all women-owned businesses are now owned by minorities.

It is clear that we need to be investing more in our women-owned small businesses. That is why the legislation I am introducing today would help ensure that the next generation of women small business owners can get the training and counseling they need to turn their ideas into realities.

This legislation would reauthorize the SBA's Women's Business Centers, WBCs, program for the first time since 1999. I am very pleased we were able to raise the authorized funding level for this critical counseling program to \$21.7 million annually. Although the number of women entrepreneurs has

continued to grow, funding for WBCs has remained flat for many years.

Last year, when I was chair of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, we took a hard look at actions necessary to propel women's entrepreneurship forward and introduced legislation that addressed three components necessary to unlock their success—increasing access to federal contracts, increasing access to capital, and improving the training and counseling programs that support them. It became very clear that women all over the country agree that the Congress must take these additional steps.

As Chair, I also issued a report, "21st Century Barriers to Women's Entrepreneurship," which demonstrated the need for the policy changes we seek in this legislation.

I am pleased to say that on October 14, one of those goals will be achieved. The Small Business Administration has finalized sole-source authority for the women's procurement program—bringing the program and the women it serves in line with other Federal contracting programs. This will result in increased access to Federal contracts for women.

The bill I introduced addresses another finding in the report which called for expanding training and counseling for women entrepreneurs. It does this by reauthorizing the SBA's Women's Business Center, WBC, program, which provides critical counseling, training, and other assistance to women, particularly in socially and economically disadvantaged communities. I cannot think of a better investment than one that helps women who want to create jobs and contribute to the economy. Women's Business Centers also provide important business counseling and training to underserved minority entrepreneurs.

The need is greater than we knew last year. Since the Survey of Business Owners, published by the Census Bureau, was released this summer, a greater number of women have started businesses. The latest preliminary data showed that there are nearly 10 million women-owned firms in the United States. This is a 27 percent increase from the survey's last iteration in 2007 and a 50 percent increase in only a decade. Women-owned businesses generate more than \$1.6 trillion in revenue.

The report we issued last year showed that women entrepreneurs benefit from the customized business training and counseling Women's Business Centers provide to help level the playing field in starting and growing a small business. The majority of women-owned businesses are still under \$24,999 in revenues. Women entrepreneurs receive only 4 percent of all commercial loan dollars, 17 percent of SBA loans, and 4.2 percent of venture capital—so there is plenty of work to be done.

It is astonishing to me that more than 100 Women's Business Centers

around the country are expected to serve this growing group of entrepreneurs. Women-owned small businesses generate needed income. According to a study released by the Association for Enterprise Opportunity, AEO, “microbusinesses can be vital for income and wealth creation in underserved communities. In 2010, for instance, female-headed family households in which at least one person owned a microbusiness generated \$8,000 to \$13,000 more in annual household income than similar households without a business owner.” For low-income households, this additional income is a path toward prosperity. The report goes on to say, “the median net worth of business owners is almost two and a half times greater than that of non-business owners.”

Liz Jamieson, Director of the Washington Center for Women in Business, a WBC in Lacey, WA, explains why we need to increase support for Women’s Business Centers. “Since our inception in 2013, the Washington Center for Women in Business has coached and supported over 400 women entrepreneurs, to help them start, grow or scale up their companies. We’ve also provided training and business skills development to over 1000 entrepreneurs in the same time frame. Our center would not exist without the partnership of the SBA. Even so, our center serves 34 of the 39 counties in Washington State, and two staff people can only do so much, although they do an extraordinary job and we get rave reviews. This legislation will empower us to empower far more entrepreneurs from all over our state, and to help them grow their businesses and create more jobs.”

The legislation enjoys broad support by a number of key national organizations that support women business owners. The Association of Women’s Business Centers, AWBC, Women Impacting Public Policy, WIPP, and the Association for Enterprise Opportunity, AEO, believe the changes we are proposing in this legislation are necessary to make this program open to more women.

In closing, I would like to thank my colleagues who have cosponsored this legislation. I also want to commend Chairman VITTER and Ranking Member SHAHEEN of the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee for their hard work and dedication to assisting women entrepreneurs succeed. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

SRI LANKA

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to address the situation in Sri Lanka, a country that has endured a brutal civil war and is working to address the difficult issues of accountability and reconciliation.

Following the historic elections in January and August, Sri Lanka has a remarkable opportunity to economi-

cally integrate with the West and build security ties. This relationship has great potential that we all hope can be realized. But before we move forward on greater economic and security cooperation, Sri Lanka must finally resolve longstanding issues of accountability that have plagued the country since the end of the war and engage in a credible and legitimate effort to reconcile amongst all communities in the country: Sinhalese and Tamil, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist.

Efforts by the last government to deal with war crimes allegations were a sham, according to the U.N., according to the U.S. Government, according to the victims and according to the current government in Colombo. Justice has been mostly nonexistent for scores across the country. Many Tamils do not trust the central government to administer a genuine and credible domestic mechanism to provide real accountability for crimes committed during the war. Many Sinhala mothers want to know what happened to their sons who served in the military. Many combatants and civilians remain unaccounted for, necessitating a comprehensive effort to identify all missing persons.

On October 1, the U.N. Human Rights Council passed Resolution 25/1, which is focused on accountability and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. This resolution is not perfect, but if fully implemented, it provides the most promising path forward since the end of the war. The resolution leaves open the possibility for international judges and prosecutors in Sri Lanka’s judicial mechanism to promote accountability. The current government has made clear that the international role will be limited to providing technical assistance and advice. As the U.S. works with Sri Lanka to implement the resolution, I urge our diplomats to push for the most robust international role in the accountability process. I also urge the Sri Lankan Government to continue to act in good faith to ensure that any accountability mechanism is seen as fair and just by all its citizens.

The U.S. led an effort to pass a 2014 U.N. Human Rights Council resolution which mandated a report on war crimes allegations in Sri Lanka. Earlier this month, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights released its report which documented “a horrific level of violations and abuses” committed between 2002 and 2011. Among the violations committed by Sri Lankan government forces, the separatist Tamil Tigers, LTTE, and pro-government paramilitaries included in the 261-page report include enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, denial of humanitarian assistance, sexual violence, indiscriminate shelling, and the recruitment of child soldiers.

The report also recommended a series of measures that Sri Lanka should take to address these issues. For example the report recommends that the

Government of Sri Lanka integrate international judges and prosecutors with an independent Sri Lankan investigative and prosecuting body to try those accused of war crimes, implement security sector reform, return land occupied by the military, strengthen witness protection programs, and establish a national reparations policy in consultation with victims and families.

Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera spoke a few weeks ago at the 30th session of the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva. His own very welcome recognition of the depth of the institutional challenges and of past failures is more than enough reason to insist on outside involvement, particularly in investigations and witness protection.

Foreign Minister Samaraweera appears genuinely committed to reconciliation. He recently announced the government’s support for a commission for truth, justice, reconciliation and nonrecurrence to help victims understand what happened and help them attain justice. He emphasized the government’s commitment to an office on missing persons based on the principle of the families’ right to know what happened to their loved ones. He announced the establishment of an office for reparations for victims. Most notably he acknowledged that any judicial mechanism for accountability will need to be designed through a wide process of consultations involving all stakeholders to include support from the international community.

Sri Lanka and its supporters in the international community expect action, not more promises, on each of these fronts.

The political will expressed by the government for a democratic future based on human rights and rule of law is something that should be acknowledged and welcomed by the U.S., international community, and all Sri Lankans. We have an obligation to support and foster this vision. As a friend, we also have an obligation to identify shortcomings as they arise throughout the process.

Moving forward, the U.S. can take several concrete measures to support Sri Lanka’s accountability process through the challenging days ahead.

First, the U.S. should work to ensure that the commitments in the current UNHRC resolution are fully implemented. Following the passage of the resolution, the U.S. should push for the most robust international role in the accountability process, to include international judges and prosecutors.

Second, the United States can support efforts to ensure witness protection inside of Sri Lanka. This could include the establishment of special security force for witness protection, developed in close coordination with leaders in the Tamil community.

Third, the U.S. military should urge its counterparts in the Sri Lankan Armed Forces to play a constructive