

we would suggest as an alternative. I will acknowledge they are the first, I believe, after all these years, to actually step up with a proposal. But it is important for us to take a close look at this proposal.

This new plan which the Republicans offered does not offer the same protection when it comes to insuring people with preexisting conditions. Does anyone know a person in their family or a friend with a preexisting medical condition? Everybody's hand ought to go up because we all do. Everybody has somebody in their family with some history—a history that, in the old days, would disqualify them from health insurance or end up with premiums they couldn't afford. The new Republican approach to replace the current protection of people with preexisting conditions doesn't give the same opportunity for health insurance for those people. That, to me, is a fatal flaw.

Secondly, we decided we would make prescription drugs under Medicare for seniors more affordable. We used to have something called the doughnut hole. It cost seniors over \$1,000 a year to pay for their prescription drugs. We started closing that doughnut hole, and it saves on average in Illinois, for every senior citizen, \$780 a year. So that is \$780 for these seniors to have in their savings, in their checkbook. The new Republican approach, the Hatch-Burr program, eliminates that and we go back to the doughnut hole. We go back to this debt.

Sadly, it doesn't provide the Medicaid coverage which people in low-income categories need. Take a close look at Medicaid. The vast majority of people receiving Medicaid benefits in America are children and pregnant moms. When we cut back on Medicaid, as this Hatch-Burr proposal does, we do it at their expense. But the largest number in terms of dollars spent who receive these benefits are those in nursing homes who are broke.

Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, keep them alive. When we cut back on Medicaid, cut back on reimbursements to the nursing home, the obvious question is: What is going to happen to grandma? What is going to happen to mom?

So when they start cutting back on Medicaid, look long and hard. The people whom we are protecting on Medicaid Programs are some of the most vulnerable in America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I was listening to what the Senator from Illinois was saying. I could not say it as well as he did, but I agree with every single word he said and I suspect that Vermonters, Republicans and Democrats alike, agree with what he said.

LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, almost 2 weeks ago the Attorney General nomi-

nee, Loretta Lynch, came before the Senate Judiciary Committee and testified for nearly 8 hours. As one who has heard Attorneys General nominees testify for the past 40 years, I cannot think of anybody who did a better job. She was clear and concise. She is a prosecutor's prosecutor. She has also responded to more than 600 written questions. Many of them have absolutely nothing to do with whether she is qualified for the job or not. But people felt they had to send in these questions for whatever reason—and she responded to them all, whether they were relevant or not. And when she is confirmed, she will be the first African-American woman to serve as the Attorney General of the United States in our Nation's history. A majority of members of the committee, both Republican and Democratic, have said they intend to support her confirmation. I am confident she has the votes to be confirmed by the full Senate.

But as of today it has been 94 days since the President announced the nomination of Ms. Lynch. Her nomination has been pending longer than any modern Attorney General nominee. We should all be able to agree that confirming the top law enforcement position should be an urgent priority of the Senate. At a time when we face all kinds of threats from terrorists—both outside our borders and within our borders—we should all be united in confirming an Attorney General nominee like Loretta Lynch. She has the experience of successfully prosecuting numerous terrorists, people who others said we should be afraid to prosecute and that we should lock them up in Guantanamo in case they are not convicted. Ms. Lynch has obtained those convictions and those terrorist are locked away in Federal prisons right now.

This Thursday, the Senate Judiciary Committee has the opportunity to vote on her nomination. I have heard that even though she has already waited longer than any other modern Attorney General nominee to be confirmed, some Republicans are considering delaying the important vote for her for two more weeks. Under our committee rule, they have the right to do so. But I urge them not to do so.

Loretta Lynch's qualifications are beyond reproach. She has been confirmed by the Senate twice before to serve as the top federal prosecutor based in Brooklyn, NY, one of the most significant prosecutors' offices in this country. Incidentally, she was confirmed both times unanimously. Under her leadership, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York has brought terrorists to justice, obtained convictions against both Republicans and Democrats in public corruption cases, and fought tirelessly against violent crime and financial fraud. It would be hard to find any prosecutor in this country in any administration who has a better record than she does, and her record shows

that as Attorney General, Ms. Lynch will effectively, fairly, and independently enforce the law.

Now, thinking back to 2007 when Michael Mukasey was nominated by President Bush to serve as Attorney General. Now, President Bush was in the end of his term as President. The Democrats had taken over the majority in the Senate that year. I served as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. President Bush talked to me and said: we need, of course, an Attorney General. I agreed. And I knew that like Ms. Lynch, Mr. Mukasey had been confirmed before by the Senate, and I also knew that this was coming toward the end of the Bush Presidency. Now, ultimately I voted against Mr. Mukasey because of his responses relating to questions on torture. But even though I was going to vote against him, I proceeded with his nomination in a very prompt manner.

It took just 53 days from the announcement of Mr. Mukasey's nomination to his confirmation. It has been 94 days for Ms. Lynch. Her nomination is needlessly on track to take more than twice the amount of time it took a Democratic-led Senate to confirm President Bush's nominee. After Mr. Mukasey's hearing, Senate Democrats could have held his nomination over in committee, but we did not. In fact, I had to hold a special markup to report his nomination out of committee as soon as possible. And he was confirmed 2 days later. Republicans should extend the same courtesy to expedite Ms. Lynch's nomination, as we did to Mr. Mukasey's.

Last week the Secretary of Defense nominee testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee—last week—and his nomination will be reported to the floor today. His nomination is expected to be confirmed by the end of the week. Now, I agree the Defense Secretary is a critically important position to fill, and I will vote for him. But so is the Nation's top law enforcement officer. I urge Senate Republicans to allow a vote on Ms. Lynch's nomination before we adjourn for a week-long recess. Please, don't treat her differently than we treated Mr. Mukasey. We were able to give him an expedited procedure. She has already waited much longer than he did. Don't make her wait even longer.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNIZING DARN TOUGH SOCKS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in Vermont, small businesses are the foundation of our State's economy.

They spur economic growth and create jobs. One such place is Darn Tough Socks—which sounds like a very small place, but it is not. They decided we should have upscale brand quality socks with a lifetime guarantee, produced in America, and not—like so many other things—have to be exported from other companies. They have done a huge amount of charity work in our State. But they are also one who shows that jobs can be created in America and can thrive in America.

As I said, in Vermont, small businesses are the foundation of our State's economy, and are incubators of innovation that spur economic growth, create jobs, and promote the quality that is known as the Vermont Brand. I am proud of the many Vermont success stories that often start out as a family business—sometimes located in an old farm house or tool shed—and mature into world-class operations that support and benefit the communities in which they operate. Our Nation's economy is growing, but in today's fast-changing business environments, the status quo is no longer enough. Darn Tough Vermont in Northfield, VT, is one such business that is not just surviving, but is thriving, in part because of its evolution in today's global marketplace, but most importantly, because of the dedicated workers that help the business grow. Darn Tough, a brand launched from its parent company, Cabot Hosiery Mills, exemplifies Vermonters' spirit of entrepreneurship, creativity, perseverance, and old-fashioned hard work.

Darn Tough's President and CEO Ric Cabot grew up thinking about socks. After all, Ric's grandfather and father succeeded in partnering their Vermont private-label sock company with national outlet stores. For a while, Cabot Hosiery Mills enjoyed growing sales, but 10 years ago, the mill saw their sales take a considerable hit, as their customers shifted business overseas. Ric stepped in to help his family navigate the uncertainty that lay ahead. The solution to their problem was a long process that led to the establishment of Darn Tough, an upscale brand of quality socks with a lifetime guarantee. Like so many other businesses, the Cabots did not move jobs offshore; they maintained the Cabot promise of quality while ensuring future employment to over 150 Vermonters. It is because of their belief in their product, and a nimble business approach, that a 36-year-old company has kept its doors open and continues to create jobs for Vermonters. Their most recent announcement that they intend to expand their Northfield, VT, mill by 100,000 square feet will result in an additional 50 jobs to the Northfield area.

Darn Tough, its leadership and its employees, are part of the fabric of the community. Most recently, the company donated complimentary socks for participants in the 20th anniversary of the Penguin Plunge, a fundraiser for the Special Olympics Vermont athletes

who will compete in this year's winter games, for participants who raise \$520 or more. This is just another example of how Vermont businesses give back, even in the toughest of times.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that an article from the Vermont Digger, dated February 8, 2015, be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Vermont Digger, Feb. 8, 2015]

DARN TOUGH SOCK FACTORY EXPANSION WILL ADD 250 TO 300 JOBS IN NORTHFIELD
(By C.B. Hall)

For Northfield, the news couldn't be better. Cabot Hosiery Mills, which has been making its Darn Tough wool socks since 2003, announced this month it is embarking on an expansion that will add 100,000 square feet—more than two acres—to its plant by the end of 2016.

CEO and president Ric Cabot expects the new facility will add 250 to 300 new jobs to the mill's payroll over the next five years. One new manufacturing position typically creates 1.6 additional local jobs in the service sector, according to the federal Advanced Manufacturing National Program Office, meaning that those new positions will translate into as many as 780 new jobs for the community as a whole. The expansion will make Cabot the town's second-largest employer, after Norwich University.

Cabot Hosiery sales have increased by 60 percent in each of the past five years.

The addition to the plant, which will nearly triple the current square footage of the factory, will "meet and get out ahead of customer demand," Cabot says.

The new space will be attached to the present facility, and will be designed so that more space can be added in the future. "Right now we're looking out five to six years," he says.

While other companies have outsourced manufacturing overseas, Cabot Hosiery kept its operations in Vermont and went after the high end sock market.

"There isn't one thing that makes us successful," Cabot says. "I'm the third generation in my family in the sock business. There's socks in the blood."

Ric Cabot's father, Marc Cabot, launched the firm in 1978, vowing that "knitting is going to come back to New England," according to a trade press article still hanging on the plant lobby's wall.

"Up until 2003 we were making socks for other people, like Gap and Banana Republic," Ric Cabot continues the story.

When the big retailers began to buy socks from offshore companies demand plummeted. Cabot says in the early 2000s the hosiery mill almost went out of business. The company reduced the workforce and cut health insurance and 401(k) plans for workers. The plant operated four days a week.

"I took it upon myself to come up with something unique, something different, something that we could sell [and] I came up with Darn Tough. I gave away 3,500 pairs at the Vermont City Marathon and people liked them."

A dozen years later, Cabot hails Northfield as "the sock capital of the world." The brand name for a new line of socks he developed—Darn Tough Vermont—not only refers to the quality of the Merino wool used in the socks, but also "to coming through the hardships [of the early 2000s]—to having to climb out of the hole we were in. The deck was beginning to be stacked against the domestic manufacturer."

In his view, the company has thrived on adversity. "The harder it is, the tougher it is, the better it is. If it's easy, what's the point?" Today he estimates Chinese socks are worn by 60 to 75 percent of the nation's population, while the rest of the hosiery sold in the U.S. comes from Mexico, Honduras, Vietnam, or Canada. Domestic production accounts for less than 10 percent of the trade, and U.S. sock manufacturers number fewer than 50, he says. Cabot operates the only sock mill in New England.

"The ones that are left have focused on quality, a premium product, with price not the driving factor in the sale." That puts Cabot Hosiery in a narrow market niche of the sort that has also sustained Vermont enterprises like Wall Goldfinger, or Morrisville stove manufacturer Hearthstone, or even the state's craft brewers.

"Nobody ever outsourced anything for the quality," he says.

Sheep in Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. Southwest supply 100 percent of Cabot's wool, while the socks are sold in national and international markets. In this global business environment, the Darn Tough brand projects a clear pride of place in its advertising slogan "still Made In Vermont, USA."

Cabot's expansion is especially welcome news in the town of Northfield, which is reeling from job losses.

Jeff Schulz, Northfield's town manager, says "the town's had some challenges."

Wall Goldfinger, the high-end furniture company that employed 45 workers in Northfield, moved to Randolph in 2012 rather than cope with the possibility of flooding out again. Wall Goldfinger's plant floor was damaged by floodwaters from the Dog River during Tropical Storm Irene in August 2011.

The local economy will lose another 55 to 60 jobs when Northfield Savings Bank, a local fixture since the 19th century, moves its corporate headquarters to Berlin in four months.

Jane Kolodinsky, who chairs the Department of Community Development and Applied Economics at the University of Vermont, is optimistic about Northfield's prospects.

"The fact that they do have a university there, that is definitely going to be a help," she says. "Then, with Cabot Hosiery, you're going to have two stable employers. You've got enough to support some sort of economic base for the community."

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, for the past week Democrats in the Senate have been filibustering a bill to fund the Department of Homeland Security for the remainder of the fiscal year. They object to the bill because it does not fund President Obama's Executive overreach on immigration—despite the fact that the President spent years declaring he didn't have the constitutional authority to grant amnesty.