

where that small business can deal with the bureaucracy and the forms and all of the things we put on them because that is where the entrepreneurship in this country starts. That is where the businesses start.

One of the things we are talking about with businesses, of course, is health insurance. We are trying to encourage the businesses to provide health insurance. But at the same time, here we come up with a lot of complicated situations for how we are going to handle that, that make it necessary for businesses to be bigger and have specialists.

We are also talking about Medicare and Social Security and how we are going to keep them solvent. One of the things we are good at doing here is trying to outbid everything. We have a Medicare system that is going broke. We have a Medicare system that everybody admits needs to be fixed. The President, in his State of the Union speech, mentioned the importance of fixing Medicare.

Plans for fixing Medicare? There is a bipartisan plan. It came out of a commission. Senator BREAUX and Senator FRIST headed up this commission. They have a plan that will save it.

Are we working on that plan? No. It doesn't generate enough publicity. We have gone to something that is a little catchier than that, and that is prescription drugs, and we are concerned about how people in this country can afford their prescription drugs and how nobody in this country should have to make a choice between food and prescription drugs. There isn't anybody here who thinks that kind of a choice ought to be made.

What kind of a plan do we have? I know of six of them among Members here in this body. I know of four that are on this side. And then there are a couple more because in the Presidential election this has been poll-tested as an important feature and both candidates have a plan.

The Washington Post has been covering the plans. I want to show you a little bit about how they are covering it.

The biggest secret out there is the details of Mr. Gore's plan. But the Washington Post has delved into them a little bit and given us a little bit of information. Again, this isn't what I have written. But the Washington Post does give Bush some credit for detailing a Medicare plan. They say:

Texas Gov. George W. Bush today proposed spending \$198 billion to enhance Medicare over the next 10 years, including covering the full cost of prescription drugs for seniors with low incomes.

Bush's plan was modeled on a [bipartisan] proposal by Sen. John Breaux (D-LA) and Sen. Bill Frist (R-TN).

[Bush's plan proposes] fully subsidizing people with incomes less than 135 percent of the poverty level and creating a sliding scale for people with slightly more money. But Gore would stop the sliding scale at 150 percent of the poverty level, while Bush would extend it to 175 percent.

I do appreciate them also going through the work of drawing up a little comparison and putting that in the paper. If you remember, on the other

side it said it was going to cost \$198 billion. They did the courtesy of adding up the columns for the two different proposals; the Gore proposal, the Bush proposal. The Gore proposal shows \$158 billion by 2010. Why did he say \$198 billion on the other page? Mystery. It also sounds as if he is spending an awful lot of money. When we total up this column, it comes to \$253 billion. That is a little more than \$158 billion.

They also do a comparison of how it is supposed to work. The biggest difference on the two sides of this chart is how it is handled, two different philosophies on how it is handled. One philosophy says the Government knows best. Send your money to Washington. Washington will handle it.

On the other side, Governor Bush says, we have a lot of things in place in this country, and they have been working well. Let's encourage them to work better and provide for more. Let's definitely not turn this thing over to HCFA.

HCFA is one of those acronyms we use around here. All you have to do is mention HCFA to any medical provider and see the grimace they get on their face. It is a system that isn't working for the things they have already been assigned, and now we are talking about assigning them more work.

Federal plan—Government knows best—as opposed to use what we have—distribute it to the States, have the States use it through the plans that have been providing health care to the people already.

I will go into the details of this at another time. I hope all of you do pay attention to what is being suggested out there because people think there is going to be a prescription drug plan that is going to be done between now and the time we adjourn this year, during this time of volatile politics.

That isn't how we do any of the bills. That is how I started this out, mentioning how our process works slowly and pretty well. It goes through a committee process usually. That is where the "bipartisan" is supposed to come in. That is where both sides suggest amendments to a good plan. But that takes time. We have limits on how long in advance before a markup, which is where they insert amendments into the bill, that you have to turn these amendments in. And then often the markup, particularly if it is a complicated issue, one as far reaching as prescription drugs, might take several different days of working through the amendments, meeting and compromising and trying to come up with the plan that will work best for our country.

That is where we need to go now. We need to have that process; we need to do that process. We should not latch on to any particular plan that is out there, unless, of course, we do the one that came out of the commission, that evolved in a bipartisan way over a long process. But that is not going to happen when the two sides have two plans.

I know the hour is getting late. I have already done my part on an education program. I want to emphasize, again, we need to pay down the na-

tional debt. I want to emphasize, again, the need to have a prescription drug plan for this country but to have the right one, not a flash-in-the-pan program, particularly not one that takes people who already have a prescription benefit and shoves them into a Federal plan against their will, taking away the right to choose that they have now. I hope we have a situation where we can work together and come up with a plan where those who are happy with their situation can continue to do it that way, and those who aren't can have a new opportunity.

That is a commitment Governor Bush has already made. He has outlined the plan. He has a plan. He has a policy. We are a little short on policies around here, but it is something that could be worked through.

One of the things I was impressed with when he became the Governor of Texas was the legislature was Democrat. He was Republican. He sat down with each and every legislator, face to face, one on one, and talked about what needed to be done for Texas. Then they did it.

Every time a new President is elected, I grab a biography that particular President likes and I read it. One of the things I found is that people repeat successes. I am sure the next President will be no different than any other President. If it is Governor Bush, I expect the opportunity to sit down with him—I look forward to it—face to face, one on one, and talk about the things that I see as necessary for this country and that he sees as necessary for this country. But more importantly, he will sit down with the people on the other side of the aisle.

One of the things we are missing in this country right now is more of a bipartisan effort, that time of sitting down and working things out. That is how it starts, with the leadership, with the President. I will be expecting him to visit with each and every person here and all 435 on the other end of this building. A tremendous effort? Absolutely. It is the most essential thing I can think of. It is the way to get things done in a bipartisan manner. That is how we will get a prescription drug plan. That is how we will improve the medical plans we already have in this country that are recognized internationally as being some of the best.

One of the great things about America is that we say we have the best, but we are always looking for ways to make it better. That is how our economy works. That is how the Government works. That is how free enterprise works.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M.
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, September 21, 2000.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:24 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, September 21, 2000, at 9:30 a.m.