

One has to do with the event yesterday, which was very tough for many of us, and that was the opportunity to review the photos related to the prisoner abuse scandal.

I thank the Department of Defense for their responsiveness so as to give everyone in this body the opportunity to view those pictures. As has been said by so many, the photos are appalling and offensive to America's sense of humanity. Many of the images we saw were consistent with those that have already appeared in the press. They are pictures and images of abusive behavior. There were a lot of photos. Others do not show prisoner abuse but do expose the character of those under investigation.

The new material supports my belief that we must act swiftly and we must fully investigate the incidents of this prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib prison to assure that justice is served. It is the mark of America, and that mark will be demonstrated by this swift justice. We must find out who is responsible for the abuses that occurred and hold them accountable. And indeed we will.

At the same time, we must all remember to separate this incident from the outstanding, remarkable work so many thousands and thousands and thousands of our brothers and sisters and men and women and children are carrying out in uniform right now in Iraq and indeed in Afghanistan and around the world. It is tremendous work, fighting for the liberty and the democracy we all cherish. It is truly disheartening to see that the actions of a few—a few—have really tarnished the reputations and professionalism of our Nation's Armed Forces. So let's never ever forget the tremendous work the men and women in uniform are doing for us right now, each and every day, and today.

I am pleased to learn Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and General Myers have traveled to Baghdad to get a better sense of what is happening on the ground in Iraq and to ensure corrective actions are being taken to prevent such prisoner abuse from ever happening again. I think it is important that they are there to boost the morale of the thousands of American troops who are serving so nobly and courageously in Iraq. This is the right and proper thing for our Nation's senior defense civilian and senior military leader to be doing.

I do again want to assure our colleagues that the American people expect, and the Senate will deliver by having its committees of jurisdiction continue their inquiries into this matter and work diligently with the executive branch to ensure that justice prevails and that such acts never ever occur again.

#### HEALTH CARE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, on a final issue, I want to comment on an issue that is dear to my heart. It stems from the fact that if you have health insur-

ance in this country today you do better than if you don't. This week is a week that addresses the issues of the uninsured, both in this body, in the Congress, in the executive branch—indeed, all over the country.

Last October I appointed a task force on health care costs and the uninsured, and earlier this week the task force, led by our distinguished colleague, Senator JUDD GREGG, unveiled its recommendations. I thank Senator GREGG for his tremendous work and each of the team members for the work they put in, both studying this issue and then fashioning a plan and proposal in a document which helps all of us in this body understand but also gives us a direction to address this huge problem.

Helping the uninsured gain more access to affordable, quality health care is one of the most critical and the most complex and most fundamental challenges in domestic policy that face us today.

Under Senator GREGG's leadership, the task force has developed a detailed, pragmatic, and systematic way of addressing this issue.

They cast a wide net to gather input from a broad range of resources. Their recommendations offer a serious and substantial framework to tackle what to many people seems to be an intractable problem of uninsurance in America.

The first thing is so obvious when you look at what the task force presented. The uninsured is not just a single sector. It is not just a piece of pie on a pie chart. It is a very complex group. It is a diverse mix. They include the chronically uninsured poor, the working uninsured, college students, and other young, healthy adults who simply choose not to get health care insurance. That complexity explains why it is impossible to have a one-size-that-fits-all approach, and, thus, the task force has drafted distinct recommendations for each of these different cohorts.

America offers the best health care in the world. We have the very best trained physicians, the very best trained nurses, top researchers, top medical research, and topnotch medical research facilities in the country doing the very best research with vast numbers of new and improved medical technology and prescription drugs. But in spite of the very best of health care, we have these chasms, these huge gaps, with the uninsured.

We have worked hard to find definitive solutions in the past. But still the number of uninsured in this country continues to climb. Forty-three million people are uninsured. Of those, 21 million people are without insurance for a year or more.

We have this coupled or working in parallel with the spiraling upward health care costs. For the second straight year, health care spending grew significantly faster than the rate of growth of the gross domestic prod-

uct by a whopping \$1.6 trillion. The cost is caused by a whole range of factors.

We have improvements in technology, which we understand. We have frivolous lawsuits. Many doctors are having to conduct and practice defensive medicine where they overprescribe in terms of diagnostic tests, really just to protect themselves in the event there is an overly aggressive lawyer who is going to be going after them.

The liability insurance rates continue to rise. With these increased premiums, doctors pay as much as \$400,000 for liability insurance such as a neurosurgeon, even if he has never been sued before in the past. It ultimately simply has to get passed on to the system itself, and that drives up everybody's health care costs.

We have medical information gaps that cause costly insufficiencies today. A lot of times doctors don't have access to up-to-date information on patients who come into the emergency room because the record for that patient may be at another hospital or in another town or in the basement of that hospital.

We can address that by improving our information technology and investing appropriately in electronic medical records.

Individuals don't have the same tax advantages if they are out working by themselves than they do if they are working with a large company. That inequity of the individual market has consequences that affect the uninsured in a way that is detrimental. Health care is expensive for small companies today.

There are initiatives we can take in this body to address the fact that small companies' access is really disproportionate in providing health care, in part, because of the types of packages that are available to them and, in part, because of the tax treatment.

We have to find a way to address this escalating cost at the same time we are addressing the issue of the uninsured. The task force materials will be shared with our caucus, and hopefully a number of these issues will be addressed and debated and brought to the floor in the appropriate form so we can really accomplish reducing the number of uninsured in this country.

I close by once again thanking Senator GREGG and the members of the task force. Their recommendations are enlightening and they are promising. They give us a great template from which to operate as we go forward.

I am optimistic that by working together in this body we can produce good ideas, we can significantly increase the number of Americans covered, and we can keep health care in America moving forward.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.