

address, and I appreciate our distinguished colleague bringing it to the floor. It is an important issue that we have to address on this floor and I think will play out in races across the country. Who is for reasonable, commonsense medical liability reform which allows obstetricians to keep delivering babies, trauma centers to stay open, and allows doctors to do what they want to do, and that is to practice medicine and take care of patients, instead of driving them away. It is as simple as that.

We are going to try to get it before the Senate, probably not in the next 18 days we have left in our legislative session, but we will bring it back again and again until we are successful.

I should mention as an aside as well, in the Presidential race, it is important, as we look at who is addressing the root causes in terms of a vision for health care, we do need to take a look at the health care plans.

The American Enterprise Institute released today a very good paper—I am sure there will be other papers—that looked at the Kerry health care plan and said it is going to cost \$1.5 trillion. That is twice what the Kerry campaign has said.

Mr. President, \$1.5 trillion is huge. The only way it can be paid for, obviously, is by increasing taxes on everybody—everybody. I encourage people to look at that document.

INTELLIGENCE REFORM

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I do want to bring people up to date—and I will be brief—on where we are with the Senate intelligence reform initiatives in light of the 9/11 Commission. Over the next several days, we will have a very busy week. It is cut a little bit short by the Jewish holidays. I believe our central focus in this body, given the fact we have so few legislative days, must be on the security of the American people, and that means the bill that is currently on the floor that we are turning to and will be voting on one of the amendments at 5:30 p.m. today, the Homeland Security appropriations bill.

It says “Homeland Security” appropriations. We have had good debate. We all hope to pass that bill late tomorrow night or Wednesday morning for sure.

Second, we need to focus on reforming our intelligence community, something people do understand—broadly the American people understand—that is reflected in the 9/11 Commission recommendations, the update of that report, the discussion of that report, and we have responded aggressively in terms of hearings, recognizing that reform should be done now, not knee-jerk but deliberate reform, and begin it in a way that will have an impact to make our intelligence better, to make our intelligence sharing among our various entities better, that makes our oversight better.

Last week, the leadership on both sides of the aisle, on both sides of the

Capitol, met with the President of the United States, who presented his plan for reorganizing the intelligence community. It was a good meeting. It was a productive meeting. There was a good discussion by the participants. The general consensus was we need to respond quickly but also very responsibly, and that really is our charge.

We are responding to the reform we all know needs to occur, but it was spelled out by the 9/11 Commission. It does not mean we should take every recommendation and do exactly what they said, but it means we need to look at those recommendations, study them, get new information, make them even more current, and then act on many of those recommendations.

The President mentioned that they in the administration have addressed 36 of the recommendations. There are really two recommendations that apply to reorganization of this body, 39 to the executive branch, and the administration has addressed 36 of those 39 recommendations.

Before we recessed in July, Senator DASCHLE and I announced that the Governmental Affairs Committee would be the vehicle, that they would have the responsibility for leading the reorganization of the executive branch, the branch outside the legislative branch.

For our internal reorganization, we announced a task force that is led by the leadership, represented by the majority whip, Senator MCCONNELL, and the minority whip, Senator REID, that would address the recommendations of Senate oversight.

The McConnell-Reid task force is meeting to discuss the whole range of options that have been put on the table, several of which were put on the table by the 9/11 Commission. Indeed, there are a lot more options that are available to be discussed and debated, and then to make a proposal as to what, based on all of this input, would be most appropriate, most responsible for this body to do, to accomplish that Senate oversight of intelligence and homeland security.

It is a bipartisan effort. When we talk about safety and security of the American people, politics falls aside pretty quickly. Senator DASCHLE and the Democratic leadership and the leadership on our side are working closely together to address the challenges before us. We have tapped into the expertise of the Congressional Research Service and other outside experts in a search for additional or other ways and means to improve Senate oversight.

The McConnell-Reid task force will meet several more times over the coming weeks. They will be assessing the 9/11 Commission's proposals, as well as other proposals. Our goal is to get a resolution to the floor before the Senate adjourns on October 8.

Meanwhile, the arm that I mentioned, the Governmental Affairs Committee arm, led by Senators COLLINS

and LIEBERMAN, continues to make steady progress. Last week, the Governmental Affairs Committee held a briefing with Robert Mueller, who is Director of the FBI, and John McLaughlin, who is Acting Director of the CIA. This morning they held another hearing with Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge.

I mention all these hearings so my colleagues and the American people know we are aggressively addressing these issues. We can expect more hearings to be held this week and in the weeks ahead, culminating in a draft bill that will be marked up that week of September 20. The bill will address the 9/11 Commission's key recommendations dealing with the establishment of a national intelligence director—we are using that little acronym NID—as well as the creation of the National Counterterrorism Center, as well as the proposals of the reorganization of the executive branch.

The committee's bill will reflect the views and the input of a number of Senate committees and Members of Congress, as well as proposals that are put forth by the President and the White House.

I am confident that the Governmental Affairs Committee product will serve as a strong, comprehensive, and serious bill that will be the baseline for our deliberations on the floor of the Senate on September 27. There will be a continuation of hearings. The main action on the Senate floor will begin soon.

I do want to show my colleagues and the American people that the Senate is moving deliberately, quickly, and in this bipartisan manner to address these national security needs.

As I said at the outset, our highest responsibility is to the safety, the security of the American people. We are working hard to meet that responsibility to move America forward, and I am confident we will get that job done. Over the course of this week, we will continue with the appropriations bills and, as I mentioned in my opening statement a few minutes ago, we are working out an agreement to address the next appropriations bill. Hopefully, we will be able to announce that either later today or tomorrow.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). The Senator from Florida.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR FEMA

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, before the majority leader leaves, I spoke with the chairman of the Appropriations Committee as he was leaving the floor and inquired as to what he is anticipating. He told me that he is anticipating there will be a House bill that would be sent sometime today on emergency assistance for FEMA and, I assume, other agencies as well.

If that is the case, then that is new information, and we can proceed on