

the HELP Committee, 400 amendments, and they say they have more to come. Here is a sample of some of their serious amendments: two amendments would force doctors to spy on each other, multiple amendments just to change the names of sections in the bill, and many amendments that simply would give greedy insurance companies the ability to deny coverage whenever they feel like it. Each of the 400 amendments says something different, but in truth they all say the same thing—no. They are designed to slow the process to a halt.

I am not making this up. Look at this newspaper today, Rollcall: "Senate GOP Still Saying 'No.'" Listen to what the story says. This is more than just a headline.

Though Senate Democrats have handed them defeat after legislative defeat this year, Republicans say they plan to continue trying to slow down the Democratic agenda on the Senate floor as much as possible. "Democrats need to know when they bring [bills] up, we're going to extend the debate as long as we can—even if we can't win it—so that their people back home know that they're voting for this junk, [said one Republican Senator]. And we're going to see it on everything."

The stalling on everything. How is that for moving this country out of the problems we have? "They plan to continue trying to slow down the Democratic agenda on the Senate floor as much as possible."

Republicans waste the time of the American people in the morning and in the afternoon complain that government is inefficient. What do I mean? We have wasted the whole week with 60 hours of wasted time on two postcloture time blocks. It is just as they said, they are just stalling for time. During that period of time, we could have moved to appropriations bills, we could have moved to many things.

I have Senators come to me. There is a bipartisan bill—Senator KERRY has worked with Senator KYL—dealing with Pakistan. It is essential that we do that. But because of what is going on here on the Senate floor with Republicans stalling, we can't get to that. I have been asked by Democrats and Republicans to do something about drug importation. We don't have time to go to it because of the stalling. The Senate GOP is still just saying no. They complain about the government being inefficient? The only inefficiency I see in Washington today is the Republican caucus in the House and the Senate.

Again, our health care system is in serious distress, and serious problems deserve serious efforts by serious legislators to develop serious solutions. That is why we are committed to lowering the high cost of health care, ensuring every American has access to quality, affordable care, and letting people choose their own doctors, hospitals, and health plans. We are committed to protecting existing coverage when it is good, improving it when it is

not, and guaranteeing health care for the millions who have none. I don't think doing nothing is an option because the cost of doing nothing is far too great. We must pass health care reform this year.

As we said at the start of this Congress, the start of the work period, and the start of this debate, we will continue doing the best work with Republicans—we will work with them. They have a place at the negotiating table, and they should take it. We will work hard to do a bipartisan bill. But in order for this bipartisan process to work, Republicans must demonstrate an interest in legislating, not this:

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I hope the American people who are watching talk to their Republican Representatives in the House and their Senators and say this isn't right.

Despite what we have seen in recent days, such cooperation is not out of the realm of possibility. Here is an example of what it looks like when Republicans and Democrats work together with each other instead of against each other and against the interests of the American people. Yesterday, Wednesday, a group called the Bipartisan Policy Center proposed a thoughtful and thorough plan for stemming this country's health care crisis. The group is led by three former Senate majority leaders—I have worked with all of them—Bob Dole from Kansas, Howard Baker from Tennessee, and Tom Daschle from South Dakota. I would mention about Tom Daschle, I think most people recognize he is a man who knows more about health care than just about anybody in America today. He has written a book, among other things. Together, Tom Daschle, a Democrat, and Senators Dole and Baker, Republicans, served a combined 80 years in the Congress. They know a thing or two about working across the aisle and getting things done. They know our job is public service, not lip-service. I may not agree with every part of their plan, but that is not the point. The point is, they have a good-faith effort. They have avoided the temptation to distract each other with misrepresentations and misinformation about the real problem. They have put people ahead of partisanship and were able to find common ground.

I encourage Republicans in Congress to read the Bipartisan Policy Center's report. Even if they do not support its conclusions, I hope they take to heart its authors' motivations. Baker, Dole, and Daschle—serious problems deserve serious efforts by serious legislators to develop serious solutions. The time for partisan games is long over. It is time to get serious about fixing our health care.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the time divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

#### THE RECOVERY ACT

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, this February, Congress passed and the President signed a historic recovery package, setting the stage for the creation of 3½ million jobs and making critical investments to strengthen the 21st-century economy. We all agree that legislation has not ended the most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression. Americans know what this administration inherited and the time it will take to get out of it. Hundreds of thousands of Americans continue to lose their jobs every month, quality health care is still far from affordable for far too many, and we still have a dangerous dependence on foreign oil that threatens our safety, our wallets, and our planet at the same time.

But the optimism we feel is real. Quick action on our part has contributed to bringing the economy back from the brink of absolute collapse. There are green shoots in this economy, and the Recovery Act has fertilized them. It has cut taxes for working Americans; it has made education more affordable; it has jump-started urgent investments that will make our commutes faster and our air cleaner, investments such as repairing crumbling bridges and highways and building high-speed transit and light rail, investments that will pay off over the course of generations. The hundreds of thousands of Americans who are going to work this morning because of the Recovery Act can tell us in no uncertain terms that the legislation is working. It is creating jobs, making responsible investments, helping workers damaged by this crisis.

But in the face of these tremendous efforts, some are questioning the effectiveness of these investments. They have decided to attack the entire recovery process by jumping to conclusions, distorting the facts, and spreading outright falsehoods—all because of their failed George Bush-style ideology that created this crisis in the first place.

There have been some who have commissioned their own report, a report which picked a conclusion first and