

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

THE PROGRESSIVE MESSAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ELLISON. Madam Speaker, my name is KEITH ELLISON. I am here to speak for the Progressive Caucus, to talk about the Progressive Message.

Tonight, before I begin, I just want to say that my heart is sick and broken for the horrible tragedy that occurred at Fort Hood, and I ask all Americans to keep the families in their prayers and in their thoughts.

I now will proceed with the hour.

Tonight is the Progressive Message, we are here to talk about a progressive message for America, a message that says the human and civil rights of all people must be respected; a message that says dignity of people, regardless of their race, class or religion must be respected; a dignity that says that if 36 other countries in the world can provide universal health care coverage for their citizens, how come the richest country in the world, not only the richest country in the world but the richest country in the history of the world, can't do it.

Why do we have 50 million people who are not covered? Why do we have a doubling of premiums for the people who do have health care coverage? Why do we have people being excluded for a preexisting condition? Why do we have these things?

Well, the time for those things to end is now. We are within grasp of major health care reform and no scare tactics, no fear-mongering, no stretches of the facts are going to change that.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle are quite upset about the present state of affairs because they know that Americans want health care reform. They want health care reform, and I believe they're going to get it.

I want to say that I have spent these last several weeks talking about the problem. I have also spent many days discussing the Democratic bill, and I will do so tonight.

But I want to spend a little time talking about what our friends on the other side of the aisle are proposing in their bill because, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, we haven't heard much detail from the Republican side of the aisle. We haven't heard much at all, but they recently put forth an out-

line of a plan, an outline of a plan, not a plan, but just sort of like an outline of one, and it's not good.

It was always convenient to just bang, bang, bang on what the Democrats were proposing, but now that America has said, okay, you guys don't like what the Democrats are calling for, what have you got? And their answer was less than satisfactory.

Under the GOP health plan—I don't believe it's been introduced as a bill yet; it's just sort of a plan—people with preexisting conditions would pay up to 50 percent more than average for insurance coverage under the GOP plan. States would have to cover the rest of the tab with a stable funding source. This is Roll Call, November 4, 2009. Check it out. Under the Republican plan, most States already have such plans but typically are much more expensive than regular insurance and have not made much of a dent in the ranks of the uninsured. Also from Roll Call.

A key piece of earlier Republican drafts, tax credits that would help people afford insurance, was rejected by the House minority leader as too expensive. Also Roll Call, November 4.

The Republican measure has no limits on annual out-of-pocket costs, which means bankruptcy for some. But let me quote from the Roll Call article: The Republican measure has no limits on annual out-of-pocket costs, nor does it provide any direct assistance for uninsured people to buy insurance.

So how are we going to deal with the uninsured problem, which you and I pay for anyway?

The Congressional Budget Office, the CBO, has said on Wednesday that an alternative health care plan put forward by House Republicans would have, quote, little impact in extending health care benefits to roughly 30 million uninsured Americans. This is from the New York Times.

Do you mean to tell me after all this attacking of the Democrats' proposal, the Democratic plan, that the Republicans have just bashed us, week after week, day after day, hour after hour, minute after minute—oh, it's bad, bad, bad, and that's all you ever hear is "no"—they finally come up with their idea and they're going to leave 30 million people uninsured?

This has got to be April Fool's Day come early. The Republican bill has no chance of passage, because Americans really don't want it, because if they did, we would be talking about it. But I quote again from the New York Times: The Republican bill, which has no chance of passage, would extend insurance coverage to about 3 million people by the year 2019.

Why aren't they embarrassed? I have no idea. The Republican bill, which has no chance of passage, would extend insurance coverage to about 3 million people by 2019, and, continuing to quote, would leave 52 million people uninsured. The budget office said, meaning the proportion of nonelderly

Americans with coverage would remain about the same as it is now, roughly at 83 percent.

Let me read it again. The proportion of nonelderly Americans with coverage would remain about the same as now, about 83 percent, meaning that we have upwards of 16 to 17 percent who don't have insurance.

Going along with the Republican plan, the Republican plan tonight, as we are discussing the Progressive Message, we're just going to talk about their plan since they got real expert talking about ours, we're going to let the American people know the real facts about the Republican plan. This is not a criticism or an attack on any individual member of the party opposite. I regard that they are honorable people, but we have to talk about their plan because it's not a good one. And the reason they haven't been bragging about it is because not even they are proud of it.

The Congressional Budget Office umpires say the House Republican health plan would only make a small dent in the number of uninsured Americans. Let me say that again. According to the Associated Press article on November 4, 2009, Congressional Budget umpires say, quote, the House Republican health plan would make only a small dent in the number of uninsured Americans.

Wait a minute. I thought that they had some great plan. How can you not make a dent in the number of uninsured Americans and still claim you have a good plan? Their plan is an embarrassment. They're not bragging about it because they, themselves, know that it's far more strategic to just bash away on the Democratic plan rather than talk about their own plan, which is nothing but status quo and keep insurance companies making lots and lots and lots of money. That's what it's all about—protect the wealthy and let everybody else do the best they can with what they got.

Let me go to another important quote: Late Wednesday, last night, a bill that Republicans expect to offer as an alternative to the Democratic package received its assessment from the congressional budget analysts who concluded that the proposal wouldn't do anything to help reduce the ranks of the uninsured. The CBO said some people would see higher premiums, including older and sicker people.

This is the Republican plan? Here is one. The CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, begins with the baseline estimate that 17 percent of legal nonelderly residents won't have health care in 2010. That's a lot of people. Seventeen percent of legal nonelderly residents won't have health care insurance in 2010. That's an indictment of the status quo, which the Republicans support.

But, in 2019, after 10 years of the Republican plan, the CBO estimates that it will still be stuck at 17 percent of the legal nonelderly residents not having insurance.

□ 2015

That is from the Washington Post today.

My goodness, how in the world can our friends from the other side of the aisle claim that they are offering an improvement on the status quo when they are not changing the proportion of the uninsured even 10 years from now?

This is a scathing indictment, and I don't expect to hear them talk much about their plan. And, if they do, they are not going to tell you about this, because this is embarrassing to them. They don't want this out. They don't want you to know about this. They want you to just keep on listening to the nonsense about death panels and school sex clinics, and they want to talk about the polarizing political issue of abortion. And I want to get to this issue of abortion in a little while.

But I want to say that they want to use polarizing language, polarizing issues that divide Americans. They want to throw up scare tactics, all of it ultimately accruing to the benefit of the status quo now, which is an industry that reaps enormous magnitudes of profit at the expense of citizens who see their premiums escalate and see themselves denied coverage and see rescissions and see all these things that have cost the American economy dearly and the American middle class.

This is a Washington Post quote: "The Republican alternative will have helped 3 million people secure coverage, which is barely keeping up with the population growth. Compare that to the Democratic bill, which covers 36 million more people and cuts the uninsured population down to 4 percent."

How can the Republicans have a straight face and offer this bill? How can they look you in the eye, after months and months of all of these disruptive meetings, where people were disrupting meetings and causing so much trouble, causing so much fear, and this is what they have to show for it?

Madam Speaker, I can't believe that they honestly are offering this as a proposal.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the Grand Old Party, the Republican Party's alternative, will shave or cut \$86 billion off the deficit in 10 years. But get this: the Democrats, according to the CBO, will cut \$104 billion off the deficit. The Democratic bill is fiscally superior to the Republican alternative.

According to the Washington Post today, you can read it, according to the CBO, the Republican alternative only cuts \$68 billion off the deficit in the next 10 years. The Democratic bill cuts \$104 billion off the deficit. That is just about \$40 million more.

Wait a minute. Aren't these the guys who always complain about the deficit and spending and all this? Maybe that claim rings hollow.

The Democratic bill, however, in other words, covers 12 times as many

people and saves \$36 billion more than the Republican plan. Let me just say this again for people listening out there. I know you have been scared.

They want to tell you that the Democrats want to take away Medicare. Not true. They are trying to tell you the Democrats are trying to change the scenario as it relates to this very polarizing issue among Americans, abortion. It basically keeps things as they are today. They are trying to talk about death panels and school sex clinics, and they are trying to say that health care reform is only about the uninsured.

None of these things are true, and it is important to come to the House floor and refute these false allegations. It is not the case, it is not right, it isn't true.

I just want to say I am so proud to be joined by one of the finest Members of this body, my dear friend from the great State of California, DIANE WATSON. She is going to get her papers together; but when she is ready to start talking, I am going to yield to her right away.

I just want to say the Democratic bill that has been released covers 12 times as many people and saves \$36 billion more than the Republican plan. It covers 12 times as many people and saves \$36 billion more than the Republican plan. Yes, I am going to keep saying this on the House floor. It needs to be said.

The fact is, today we had a lot of visitors in Washington, and I want to say welcome to those folks. My colleague from the great State of Minnesota, and I am so proud to be from Minnesota, my friend, Congresswoman BACHMANN, invited people down, and folks came. And I am glad they showed up, because democracy is good, and it is good to have people here.

Now, I will say that many of the people who came down to support my colleague from Minnesota, we probably didn't see the issue the same. But I just want to say, I was honored to have them in my office. I am so proud that I was able to talk to my colleagues.

But here is the thing that broke my heart. As they were explaining to me what their concerns were, they were saying, I have been dropped because of a preexisting condition. They were saying, I have been unemployed and I can't find an insurance policy to cover me. They were saying, I am afraid that I am going to go bankrupt. My family doesn't have any money. I lost my job. My husband lost his job. What are we going to do? And I said, you know what? You got on the wrong bus coming here, my friend. This Democratic bill is the one you need to be looking at.

The fact is that good people have been scared away from policy that is going to help them. Good people, made afraid that policies that are going to help them are not for them. And that is a shame.

So we had to come down here to the House floor today to explain that the

fact is that middle class, working-class people struggling to make ends meet are going to benefit from the Democrats' proposal.

I just want to say that after years of the Republicans being in power, years where they had the House, the White House, the Senate, doing nothing at all to help Americans, Democrats are taking care of business right now. I am so glad we had a lot of people and I was able to talk to constituents and others about this important issue of health care. Some of us started out not on the same page, but we ended up a lot closer together because I was able to say here are the true facts, not the made-up ones.

I yield to the gentlelady from California.

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure and an honor for me to come down and join my colleague, KERTH ELLISON. He has been a driving force to bring reality to the public.

Congressman ELLISON, I want to thank you for your diligence. What really gets to me is the misstatements, the fear that has been put out to the public. And think about this: Why are people ranting about health coverage and not reasoning about it?

They have made fun of our President, Barack Obama. They have disrespected him on this floor when a Member hollered out for the first time in the history of this House, "You lie." I hope the world saw that and questioned what that was all about.

When they talk about NANCY PELOSI, the first woman to be Speaker, and talk about PelosiCare, that it is going to take benefits away from seniors, those are lies.

I tell people when they come up to me, remember, we started off trying to cover Americans that had no insurance, somewhere around 38 million. Private insurance companies make profits off your health care. They make profits off the condition you are in. Why should health, good health, be profit-making? We should address the health needs of Americans.

Now, you are going to hear the opposers say, You are putting our kids and our grandkids in debt. Well, they never said that when we fought an unnecessary war in Iraq, costing us \$15 billion a month. If we were to send additional troops to Afghanistan, it is going to cost us \$5 billion. And what do we get as a result of that? Do you think we are going to be able to stabilize these nations thousands of miles away at the expense of our people and our country?

Just today, there was a horrible massacre on one of our greatest and largest bases, Fort Hood in Texas. Think about all the medical personnel that would have to be there to care for those 31 that were injured. Twelve people lost their lives. And one of the suspects is a mental health professional, a major who is a licensed psychiatrist. What does that tell you?

So what are we trying to do? If we want to be the strongest Nation on

Earth, we have to be sure Americans are strong. We have to provide for those less able than many of us.

You are going to hear people say you don't want government running your health care. They don't do anything successfully. Then you are already condemning our victory that some people are expecting in Iraq and Afghanistan and so on. If government doesn't do anything successfully, then we all ought to go home. We are a fraud.

But ask this question: What is Medicare? What is Medicaid? What is Social Security? These are government-run programs as part of that safety net.

In the richest country on Earth, why should anyone go hungry or go without health care? If we had a government-sponsored option, and let me just define for the people who don't understand the meaning of "option," "option" says you make the decisions. It is a misstatement to say that government will get in between you and your doctor. That is so untrue, and the people who are saying that know it.

Mr. ELLISON. If the gentledady will yield, is it not the case today that some insurance company bureaucrat can get between a patient and her doctor?

Ms. WATSON. I chaired the Health and Human Services Committee in the California State Senate in Sacramento, California, for 17 years; and we put in place a program. We were always coming up against HMOs, health maintenance organizations. If a doctor prescribed a particular drug for his patient, they would have to call in to some other office, maybe it is the secretary or whatever, and say, Can the doctor prescribe this medicine for the patient? If it wasn't on the formulary, it won't happen.

□ 2030

So I know the experiences because being there 17 years and having people come and testify in front of us because an HMO said I want 150,000 patients in my pool, and they are all-out in south central Los Angeles, our hospital closed out there, they were assigned to a hospital maybe 30 or 40 miles away, a mother with her three children would have to spend 3 hours trying to get health care. It is not accessible.

I know of what I speak. I lived through it. We designed policies so we could address the human needs of all of our people. And we can't have a successful democracy if we discriminate. What I mean by discrimination, we fought the battles in the 1960s discriminating against people of color. Now we are trying to fight the battle of poor people, fight for them who cannot afford this expensive insurance.

In my State of California, if we didn't have this plan, your insurance would go up by \$1,800 for the year for a family of three. So I am doing everything I can. You know, we live in a State that is the first State in the Union to be a majority of minorities. What most people don't know, don't want to know, is

most of our immigrants don't come from across the southern border, they come from across the Pacific Ocean. Vietnam—you have heard of some of these places—Korea, Japan, China, and they come with their own needs. We try to accommodate human beings in our State. Our State is the largest State in the Union, and we are suffering like many other States, but we are suffering to provide the necessary needs of our citizens.

We say for all Americans, we can quibble over whether they are here legally or whatever, but what we are trying to do is provide quality health care for Americans.

So I don't understand those people who are ranting and are outraged. They believe the lies they have been told.

Mr. ELLISON. I talked to some of the people walking around today. I was impressed with how good and decent many of them were. Many didn't have the facts straight. Many were suffering with real problems with health care. I think we need to take the time to talk to people. The fact is everyone knows there are certain TV people and radio personalities, and I am not even going to give them credit by mentioning their names, but these people, because of entertainment and ratings, they try to play on fear and whip up anxiety among Americans who are just trying to put food on the table. So they get scared.

People want to express themselves politically, but the leaders in front of them are not giving them good alternatives, they are just giving them fear. They are saying, Be afraid of those immigrants. Be afraid of those people over there who are not the same religion as you. Be afraid of these people over here. Just be afraid. As people are afraid, they are easier to manipulate. We ask people to overcome their fear and get the facts.

If I may just offer a few more critiques of the Republican bill. Here is what The Washington Post said: Amazingly, the Democratic bill has already been through three committees and a merger process. It is already being shown to interest group and advocacy organizations and industry stakeholders. It has already made compromises and been through the legislative sausage grinder. And yet, it covers more people and saves more money than the blank-slate alternative proposed by House Republicans.

Now I just want to ask the gentledady from California, we have been working on health care for a long, long time. I have had to deal with angry folks at angry community meetings. People are worried. They are concerned. We have walked through that fiery furnace and done those tough town meetings. We have withstood all of that. You would think that our bill would be watered down to the point where it couldn't help anybody, but that isn't the case. The Democratic bills covers 12 times as many people and saves \$36 billion more

than the Republican plan. How can that be? The Republican plan, which was just recently introduced to the American people, actually doesn't save as much money and doesn't cover as many people as the Democratic plan when they are just getting started.

You and I know when you first introduce a bill, it is just going to get sandpapered. People are going to wear it away. People show up and say, I don't like this part, and I don't like that part. After a while, your bill used to be here, and it is getting less and less. It doesn't meet as much of your vision, but that is okay, that is democracy. We have to come in here and we have to give and take and try and consider everybody's interests.

But this Democratic bill, having gone through a very rigorous process of democracy, the writer here calls it a sausage grinder, still saves way more money and covers way more people than the Republican bill. I want to know, how can that possibly be? Where are these great ideas we have been hearing about?

You remember during President Obama's speech in this very room, they're holding up pieces of paper, here is our plan, here is our plan, and they come up with a plan that is more expensive and doesn't cover as many people as the Democratic plan. There is a reason why the American people voted overwhelmingly to send Democrats to Congress last November because this is the best they could come up with. It is actually quite embarrassing. I feel a little bad for them.

I yield back to the gentledady.

Ms. WATSON. I always say be a seeker of truth. I taught school for many years. I told my youngsters, you need to reason. Let's think this through together. I can tell you anything. Seek the truth. Check it out. When it is said that we are going to take benefits away from seniors, that is untrue.

When it is said that government, who fails at everything it does, you know, how are they going to do this, we are not running the program. What we do is allow citizens to come to the marketplace and choose a plan, A, that they can afford; B, that is accessible; C, that will allow them to get into the coverage even if they have asthma, even if they had breast cancer, even if they have diabetes, they can come in and be covered.

You can say to seniors under our plan, when you hit that doughnut hole, you won't go through the hole and hit rock bottom because we are going to close that hole.

Mr. ELLISON. Which party was in power when the doughnut hole, the doughnut hole that people are falling into that needs to be fixed and is going to be fixed by the Democrats, what party was in power when the doughnut hole came to be?

Ms. WATSON. The Republicans were in the White House, they had the Senate and this House. I was in here. We were in here until 6 in the morning. I

watched them browbeat one of the Members. She had voted, and they brought her back and huddled around her, and she was in tears until she changed her vote.

That was the worst thing we could do for seniors because when they fall into that hole after they have spent \$2,700, they fall into that hole and they cannot afford to buy food or to pay their rent if they are going to buy their prescriptions that keep them living day by day.

Why should an American, and particularly our seniors, have to make that kind of choice? We are not playing with this. You know, I have heard people say they have done it in secret in some dark, smoky room. It has been up on their e-mails, it has been up on their computers for weeks. There is a process that you go through and you do not violate the process in Congress. Every bill that comes out of a committee has to be heard, and most Members have time to speak to that bill and most Members vote on the bill with an audience out there.

And if the bill gets a number of votes, then it leaves that committee. It might go to another, but everyone knows the process.

Now they are saying well, you've taken three bills and you are blending them together and we don't know what is in those bills. I have even heard Members come up with these thick stacks of paper and say look at this. Well, when you write law that you expect to impact on Americans, you better put everything in there you mean, and that is where you use the word "shall." I heard the minority leader say, Do you know how many times they used the word "shall"? Well, if you want it to be law, you need to say "shall." If you don't mean for it to become law, then you can make it permissive and say "may." Let's explain the process to our people. Let's not keep the people ignorant. Let's educate them. As an educator, that is what I want to do.

To finish, I want to let our seniors know that the majority of people in this Congress know that our health care system in this country is broken and we want to strengthen what is working. Medicare has provided health care for Americans age 65 and older for the last 44 years, and it is working. When they say they want a coverage like ours, we are covered under Medicare. And it will be strengthened under the House's reform legislation. The reform will mean better benefits at lower cost and will preserve Medicare solvency for years to come. And without reform for all Americans, health care costs will keep rising and could jeopardize Medicare's ability to keep covering the costs.

Rising costs hits seniors, their wallets, too. And so with the average part D plus part B premium consuming an estimated 12 percent of the average Social Security benefit in 2010, and it will be 16 percent by 2025, so we know that

the debate on reform has been intense, but it is a good thing. Let's get this all out in the open and then let's correct the misstatements. Let's be sure that we educate the people with the truth, and just know that nothing has been done behind closed doors that you have not heard.

We can debate it on this floor, and we are going to do that. So I want to end by saying we can have a better America. We can keep our people healthy. We can have peace, but it starts here. And we need to come together as a House of Representatives; not as Democrats, Republicans, Independents, fighting each other. We can express our positions, and we can do it with comity. We can do it with collegiality. We can do it by listening to someone else's position.

I am going to truly close, but when I held my last community forum, I said: All of you have the right to be heard, but you don't have the right to disrupt and block me from hearing you. So if you do that, then you will be escorted toward the door. If you have a question, write it down. Be proud of your question and put your name on it. If you don't put your name on your question, it goes to the bottom of the list. So we will listen to you and respond to you, but you cannot block the communication.

So what we are doing is trying to communicate with Americans out there in the field. We are going to express the truth the best we can. Thank you so much for having tonight's Special Order. We really appreciate your commitment and your dedication.

Mr. ELLISON. I thank the gentlelady and appreciate the gentlelady's remarks about collegiality, and also the gentlelady reassuring our seniors about what is really in the bill. This whole fear thing about scaring seniors about taking away their Medicare, I really don't appreciate. My dad was born in 1928 and my mom was born in 1938. Both of them are folks who would be classified as seniors, both very active, vibrant people, and both of them definitely active at the polling places and voting.

□ 2045

And they've actually asked me, Is this really true? And I have to explain, Mom, no, it isn't true. But the reality is this is a campaign tactic to try to scare seniors and try to scare all kinds of Americans. I'm of the mind that, let's not use fear tactics, let's use logic and truth.

Here's a few facts:

The House Republican bill will cover just about 3 million more Americans over the course of 10 years. Today, 83 percent of the nonelderly Americans are insured. Under the GOP plan, 83 percent of nonelderly Americans would still be the proportion of the uninsured in 2019. No change.

So I ask the gentlelady, look, if the problem today is the high percentage of the uninsured, people who are au-

thorized to be in America and people who are nonelderly, if the proportion of uninsured is 17 percent, shouldn't we be better off in 10 years? Under the Republican plan, we will not be. I think that is a complete failure of their effort.

The Affordable Health Care for America Act put forward by the Democratic-led Congress extends coverage to 36 million more Americans. Today, 83 percent of the nonelderly Americans are uninsured. Under the Democratic plan, 96 percent of nonelderly Americans will be insured. That's what I call success. I hope some of our friends on the other side of the aisle come on and join this plan that's good for America.

The House Republican bill does not reduce the number of people who must buy insurance on the individual market because they're self-insured, don't have coverage of their employer, or lose their jobs. This segment of the market now pays the highest premiums and consumer abuses by the insurance industry. No change in this unfair practice.

The Affordable Health Care for America Act put forward by the Democrats creates a health insurance exchange with a public plan as one of the choices people have that provides competition and offers large group rates to employees of small businesses, entrepreneurs, and Americans looking for jobs. Under the Democratic plan, affordable options and affordability credits make all the difference, something the Republican plan—even though they've had all this time to think of something good, haven't been able to think of anything good at all.

Preexisting conditions. The Republican bill fails to require insurance companies to end the practice of discriminating against Americans with preexisting medical conditions. Let me just say this one more time, Mr. Speaker. The Republican bill fails to require insurance companies to end the practice of discriminating against Americans with preexisting conditions.

There's no wonder that they have and will spend their time this evening talking about the divisive, polarizing issue of abortion, this very important issue which has Americans of goodwill arguing both relatively strongly held positions, trying to get us fighting over that when we're talking about health care reform. They say, Don't worry about this health care reform. Let's talk about this divisive issue that has divided Americans for so long. This is not a bill about abortion. This is a bill about health care reform. Why don't they want to talk about that fact?

The Republican bill does not repeal antitrust exemptions for health insurance companies. Why not? The Republican bill does not repeal antitrust exemptions for health insurance companies. Why do they want to protect the health insurance companies? Why don't they want the health insurance companies to compete? Who is getting PAC money from the health insurance companies? Let's find out.

The House Republican bill does not include provisions to stop price gouging by insurance companies. Why not? The Affordable Health Care for Americans Act put forth by the Democrats—and, again, we've only had the White House for a few months and only had this Chamber, been the majority in the House for a couple of years; not long. We haven't been here long, but even though we haven't been here long, we've come up strong, because this bill, the Democratic bill, ends discrimination against Americans with pre-existing medical conditions. The Democratic bill finally ends the anti-trust exemption. The Democratic bill gives States \$1 billion to crack down on price gouging by health insurance companies.

The fact is American consumers and small businesses deserve better than what the Republican bill offers to them. The Democratic bill, the Affordable Health Care for America Act, is a fiscally responsible bill that will reduce the deficit by \$104 billion over 10 years; way more, way more, \$36 billion more than the Republican bill. And I want to know, if the Democrats can face this very difficult process that we've gone through all summer—I had health care forums in my district and so did the gentelady from California. Some people came up very upset because they've been listening to some of these radio guys and some of these TV guys scaring them and giving them misinformation, so they come into the meeting upset, loaded for bear. They want to talk to me. I want to talk to you, Mr. ELLISON. But when the facts come out, they're like, Oh, okay, I get it now. And we just ask people to keep their minds open.

I just say that if the Republicans have a real alternative around health care, how come they didn't come up with anything in the House from 1994 to 2006? Nothing did they come up with. Oh, they did veto SCHIP. We've got to give them credit for that. Vetoed SCHIP. Vetoed State Children's Health Insurance Program; can you imagine that? Oh, my goodness. I think that that is not good service to the American people.

I do hope we get some Republican votes on this bill because I think there has got to be some Republicans who say, You know what? Skip all the bickering. The Democrats have been open to our ideas when we offered them, but we didn't offer them because we would rather beat the Democrats at the polls than give Americans real health care reform. Think about that. They would rather beat the Democrats at the polls and try to use this as a political thing rather than say, You know what? We're going to do something for the American people. Oh, my goodness.

Let me turn to this poster board I have here. The Democratic bill—let's set the record straight. Here's a myth: The Democratic bill will hurt small businesses. Not true. If you heard it today or if you hear it later today,

don't believe it. Small chemical facilities are already regulated by the DHS. The bill requires DHS to assess potential impacts of IST on small businesses. And \$225 billion in grant funding is available for small businesses.

This will interfere with business operations. The fact is is that this bill will not interfere with business operations, it will not be a boon to plaintiffs' attorneys, and it will not do any of these things that are claimed by the Republicans over and over and over again.

We hear the Republicans say we need to have tort reform. Let me just say, if you have a loved one who has a medical error, you have a right to go to court over that. Don't let anybody scare you away from your right to go to court when a doctor or a hospital fails to meet medical standards.

Ms. WATSON. Would you yield?

Mr. ELLISON. Yes, I will.

Ms. WATSON. You know, it's always very interesting to me. I sat on the Judiciary Committee for 17 years and I carried the California trial lawyers' funding bill every other year. And of course opposition would say, frivolous. Well, if your right leg was amputated and the condition was in the left leg, they amputated your right leg, the first thing you would do is run to get the most high-powered lawyer you could and you would sue the doctor and the hospital out of business. So you can say frivolous cases, but when it comes to your own health and the health of your loved ones—and I haven't seen a company without its set of lawyers. So we use them when we want to be sure that the law works on behalf of ourselves and our loved ones. If it's for somebody else, it's frivolous. So let's think about what we're saying with tort reform.

And we can lower the cost if we have quality health care, meaning we have quality personnel. And do you know there are provisions in our bill that will help to subsidize medical students that want to go into primary care? And so we want to build a whole cadre of quality health providers that will practice medicine on behalf of the human interest to keep our people healthy.

So when we talk about tort reform, let's think it all the way through and don't treat it in a frivolous way.

Thank you very much, and good night.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, let me just thank the gentelady for that, because the reality is that Republicans are saying, Oh, we have a plan on tort reform and we want to give tax cuts and tax breaks—they've been talking about fragments of their plan for a long time, but when the reality of their plan came out, it was pretty dismal. I mean, here's what Ezra Klein says, of the Washington Post: Republicans are learning an unpleasant lesson this morning. The only thing worse than having no health care reform plan is releasing a bad one, getting thrashed by the CBO, and making the House Democrats look good.

We want to thank you for that.

The Democratic bill covers 12 times as many people and saves \$36 billion more than the Republican plan. The New York Times, the Budget Monitor says: GOP leaves many uninsured.

Again, the Congressional Budget Office said Wednesday that the alternative health care bill put forward by House Republicans would have little impact on extending health benefits to roughly 30 million uninsured Americans. You can go right down the ranks, but piece after piece shows that this Republican plan that they released is abysmal.

I want to have some conversation about the Republican plan, because they've been beating up on the Democratic plan from the very beginning, yet it has gone through three committees. It has had a merger process. It has been beaten and smashed and attacked, and yet, still, still the Democratic bill is far and away superior to the Republican plan, maintains its public option. The fact is I think the American people are really going to start seeing who is looking out for their health.

Let me turn now to a few health care stories if I may.

A good friend, Amy. Amy says, "I'm a graduate student working part-time at a restaurant. I applied for individual health insurance through Medica, hoping to pay their nice low rate, \$99 a month for a pretty good plan and a fairly low deductible; however, Medica denied my individual application because I marked on my application that I have anxiety and take medication for it. It is a little ironic; not having insurance gives me more anxiety.

"I was recently approved for group health insurance through a company that owns the restaurant I work for. However, to stay on the group plan, I have to maintain a workload of 24 hours a week on average over a year, which can be hard to do as a full-time student. This group insurance is through Medica, and I will be paying \$95 each month, which is affordable for me. However, I got a letter from Medica saying that my anxiety is considered a preexisting condition, so any treatment or medication for it will not be covered for a year. After 1 year, I can appeal for coverage. In the meantime, I will continue to pay for my medication out of pocket and not go to therapy because it will be too expensive.

"Please pass Federal health care reform that includes a public health insurance option that is affordable to middle-income families in Minnesota."

This young lady would not be barred from getting health care insurance because of her anxiety, which the insurance company called a preexisting condition, yet under the Republican plan she still would be.

David from Minneapolis: "I am a small business owner and do provide health care to my employees, but this is a serious financial risk to my company. It's a moral issue, so I don't want

to cancel health insurance, but I might have to in order to survive. It's scary to think about not being able to provide health insurance for employees or going under as a business. Knowing that I would always have access to reliable, affordable health care would relieve my fears.

"I would like to tell those who oppose health care reform that this is a moral issue. We should be taking care of each other. It's an embarrassment to our country to be one of the wealthiest countries and not have health care for all. Please pass Federal health care reform that includes a public insurance option."

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We've been joined by JARED POLIS, who is an excellent advocate for the people's rights. He has been very vocal and has been a strong advocate of health care reform. I want to turn it over and yield to my friend from Colorado (Mr. POLIS).

Mr. POLIS. I would like to thank Mr. ELLISON, certainly, for the kind introduction and for sharing very powerful stories.

I have had the opportunity to share a number of stories on the floor of the House of Representatives, and these are all real people who are impacted. I think that, perhaps, my colleagues in the House and those watching us can see in themselves some of the experiences that American families go through.

We're not just talking about the uninsured out there, some mysterious group that you're not a part of because you might have insurance. We're talking about American families, American families who are worrying because one of the parents lost a job; we're talking about soccer moms; we're talking about people with preexisting conditions.

I want to briefly talk about immigration in the context of immigration and health care reform. I received some false information from an anti-immigrant group. The name of this group is the Federation for American Immigration Reform. They're actually a group that fights against immigration reform, but their name says that they're for immigration reform.

They believe—and I believe that similar comments have been echoed on the floor of the House of Representatives—that there is in the health care bill before us something that allows illegal aliens to game the system and to access taxpayer-subsidized health care benefits.

What they're seeking to do—and it would significantly raise the cost of the bill should they succeed—is to prevent our undocumented population, some 12 to 15 million people who reside in our country and who contribute in so many ways, from buying insurance through the exchange.

Now, remember, the "exchange" is something that doesn't exist today. It's set up under law. It is not subsidized

health care. It is where small businesses or individuals will go. They, of course, will pay the full market rate. There will be many private companies that will participate in the exchange and that will design products for the exchange. It is not a benefit. It is simply a marketplace. We've never before barred anyone from being able to purchase a product like health insurance at full price because of one's citizenship or immigration status, nor is it good policy.

I think that many of us on both sides of the aisle would agree that we shouldn't have as large an undocumented population as we do. I dare say we shouldn't have an undocumented population at all. There might be different solutions to that. Mine would simply be to normalize the status of those who are here, who work hard and who contribute so much to our country. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle, who also agree we shouldn't have a large undocumented population, might, in fact, have a different solution to that.

Insofar as they are here, we should, all of us, regardless of where we stand ideologically, want them to buy insurance with their own money if they are willing to. They certainly all won't; but to the extent that they do, they are less of a burden on the rest of us. Anybody who would seek to prevent them from accessing the exchange, which will really be "the place"—"the place" for individuals to buy insurance—effectively is saying that taxpayers should subsidize illegal immigrants.

Frankly, I think that there are many across the country who have a problem with that. To prevent undocumented immigrants from being able to buy insurance from the exchange is saying that taxpayers should pay for their health care. They're going to go to the emergency rooms. They won't have insurance. The costs will be shifted to the rest of us and to taxpayers. We should encourage our undocumented population to buy insurance with their own money. Again, I don't think all of them will, but some of them will. That's a very good thing, and I'm very hopeful that many undocumented immigrants will participate in this exchange.

The exchange makes health care affordable for individuals. Right now, we have an issue where individuals don't have the buying power of big companies. If you have a preexisting condition, which is that scarlet letter that so many residents of our country wear, forget about it. Whether you're a citizen or a noncitizen, if you're an individual, the exchange will allow you to pool your risk. The exchange has the buying power that previously has only been enjoyed by large corporations. It allows one to negotiate the very best rates with insurers. Once again, the exchange is not a benefit. It is not a product.

Mr. ELLISON. I just want to say thank you, Madam Speaker, for allow-

ing us the time for the Progressive message. I yield back the balance of my time.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2847. An act making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, and Science, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate insists upon its amendment to the bill (H.R. 2847) "An Act making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, and Science, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes," requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. INOUE, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. KOHL, Mr. DORGAN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. REED, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. NELSON (NE), Mr. PRYOR, Mr. BYRD, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. GREGG, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. ALXANDER, Mr. VOINOVICH, Ms. MURKOWSKI, and Mr. COCHRAN, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. PIN-GREE of Maine). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I thank you for the time, and I thank my minority leadership for the time.

We will spend our hour talking about health care reform; and we will try to compare and contrast, Madam Speaker, many of the policies that were just described by our colleagues on the Democratic side of the aisle, by the majority party Members: the gentleman from Minnesota, the gentlewoman from California, the gentleman from Colorado. A number of statements were made in regard to their bill, the Pelosi health care bill, the 2,000-page bill. In fact, Madam Speaker, I have that bill behind me, and we'll take a look at it in just a few minutes.

We certainly want to talk about the 261-page bill, Madam Speaker, which is the Republican alternative that, indeed, as we know from a letter that we just received yesterday from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office, across the board, the Republican alternative lowers the price of health insurance premiums on an average of 10 percent. I'm not sure that my colleagues who have left the floor now—and if they were still here, I would be happy to yield them time, but I'm not sure that they can say that with regard to this massive, monstrosity of a bill of