

Last night's vote took both courage and common sense. Their votes were momentous. They were historic. They were right.

After a century of working and waiting, going back to the days of Theodore Roosevelt, real reform will become the law of the land, not in a matter of years or months or weeks but in a matter of hours. In the very near future, various parts of this bill will take effect and improve the life of millions. Soon insurance companies will no longer be able to refuse to cover children with preexisting conditions. They will no longer be able to drop your coverage just because you get sick.

Small businesses that today cannot afford to cover their employees will soon get tax credits to help them right that wrong. Tens of thousands of small businesses will benefit in Nevada alone—24,000 to be exact.

Reform means that if you have a preexisting condition and no health insurance, you soon will be able to finally afford the care you need to get and stay healthy.

If you are stuck in the prescription drug doughnut hole, you will soon get a check to help pay for your medicine. That will help seniors stay healthy while we completely close that loop-hole, once and for all, for nearly 60,000 Nevada seniors and millions more across the country.

Also, starting this year, no insurance company will be able to impose a lifetime limit on your benefits.

Those changes are just a tip of the iceberg. They are only some of the benefits that will kick in almost immediately—some in 3 months, some in 6 months but none longer than what I am going to talk about today—just a fraction of what this bill will do over the long term for the health of our Nation, our economy, and, most importantly, our citizens.

When all is said and done, more than 600,000 Nevadans will be able to access affordable coverage. More than 300,000 Nevadans will get tax credits to help them buy health coverage from the private market. Another 300,000 seniors in the State of Nevada will get free preventive annual services, such as physicals and checkups.

Nevadans who buy insurance on their own will also save money. Because of this bill, their premiums will go down as much as 20 percent, which means Nevada families can save more than \$2,000 a year.

This bill will also save our country money and lots of it. Over the next 10 years, it will slash our deficit by \$143 billion; in the next 10 years, a \$1.3 trillion deficit reduction.

Many Senators deserve credit for getting us this far, and many will help us cross the finish line this week.

I thank especially Chairman BAUCUS, who oversaw the financial aspect of this bill that will bring down health care costs and vastly reduce our deficit; Chairman DODD, who oversaw the parts of reform that will ensure more

healthy Americans, and they did that in the HELP Committee. Not only will it allow people to stay healthy, it will allow them to stop being sick in the first place. Our friend, Ted Kennedy, must surely be proud of this work. Chairman HARKIN, who has led the HELP Committee down the home stretch, deserves our thanks for the work he has done to make college more affordable. Chairman CONRAD, who is head of the Budget Committee, will continue to guide us through the budget reconciliation process—a fiscally responsible final piece that will further reduce the deficit, ensure more Americans can afford more health insurance, and fully close the doughnut hole.

I know the other side watched the House vote last night, as we did. As they did, I hope they finally learned that a strategy of delay, myths, and fear might slow progress, but it cannot stop it. I hope this week, when we take up the final revisions of what will soon be the long overdue law, our Republican friends will finally act in the interests of their constituents and not just in the interests of the insurance industry or their political party.

The other side has made it clear they will try to stop progress based on a technicality. But without substance, they are powerless. What this budget process is all about is simply making a good law that we passed on Christmas Eve even better.

The other side is still talking about the number of pages in the bill, but we will not stop talking about the number of lives it will save.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, last night marked a turning point in our politics and in our Nation.

On a Sunday night in March, with the Nation howling in opposition, a bare majority of Democrats in the people's House ignored the people to claim a win for their party, and then they celebrated. The American people watched all this in utter disbelief.

Here is what the Democrats voted for last night: a vast expansion of the entitlement state that we cannot afford, massive cuts to Medicare, higher taxes, higher health care costs, worse care, taxpayer-funded abortions. Do not believe the spin that this was not a party-line vote. Yes, not a single Republican voted for the bill, but a whole lot of Democrats voted against it as well.

The fact is, the so-called Senate version of the health care bill that passed the House last night could not even pass the Senate today. Why is that? Because this bill is so deeply unpopular that the voters in the most lib-

eral State in the country just elected a Republican to the Senate for the first time in nearly four decades in order to stop it.

Democrats want to pretend this did not happen. They want to pretend New Jersey and Virginia and Massachusetts simply did not happen. They want to pretend the views of the people who sent us here do not matter. They want to pretend we can afford a \$2.5 trillion entitlement in the middle of a recession, when we cannot even meet the obligations we already have. They want to pretend future generations will not have to bear the burden of their actions. They want to pretend our actions today will not affect the American dream tomorrow.

They are living in a fantasy, and today that fantasy becomes even more absurd. As if the bill they voted on yesterday was not bad enough, now they want to make it even worse. That is what is going to happen in the Senate. That is what is going to happen in the Senate this week.

Democratic leaders now want us to take the bill that passed the Senate back in December and that the House voted on last night and make the tax hikes even higher and the Medicare cuts even deeper. They want us to endorse a raft of new sweetheart deals that were struck behind closed doors just last week so this thing could limp over the finish line last night.

Americans said they did not want this bill. Democrats passed it anyway. They said they did not like the deals and they did not like the giveaways. Democrats struck them anyway. Now they want to make this bill even worse. They want to add more deals on top of the other ones. Well, I have a message for our Democratic friends: Enough is enough. No more tax hikes, no more Medicare cuts, no more dealmaking, no more backroom deals.

Democrats may have won their vote last night, but they lost the argument and they have lost the trust of the American people. Americans know you don't drive down the cost of health care by spending another \$2.5 trillion on health care. They know we can help people with preexisting conditions without slashing Medicare to do it. They know we can do all these things without crippling the economy or forcing taxpayers to pay for abortions. Americans see through the false choices they have been handed by the Democrats here in Washington.

Democratic leaders may have gotten their votes, they may have gotten their win, but today is a new day. Already we are seeing Democrats in the Senate distancing themselves from this effort to make a bad bill worse. So we already know that reconciliation is guaranteed to have bipartisan opposition. Democrats were hoping they could silence the voices of the American people last night, but starting today those voices are going to be heard. Senate Republicans are going to make sure those voices are heard.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate will be in a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally controlled and divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

Mr. BEGICH. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Senator BEGICH pertaining to the introduction of S. 3150 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

REMEMBERING STEWART UDALL

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I was talking with the Senator from New Mexico and the Senator from Wyoming about Stewart Udall, whom the majority leader also talked about a little earlier. He is the father of Senator TOM UDALL and the uncle of MARK, and a great, distinguished American. He lived 90 long, good years, and did so much in our country to focus on conservation and the outdoors. So we remember and celebrate his life and send from our family, and I am sure from the entire Senate, our best wishes to our colleagues TOM and MARK and to their families.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I have been in and out of public life a long time, and I have never had anything affect me in a personal way like the health care debate. I got up this morning in West Millers Cove in Blount County and drove to the Knoxville airport, and almost every single person with whom I talked on the way into the airplane had something to say to me about the health care debate. When I get on the plane, here comes another fellow right down the aisle, hands me a note, and says: Thanks for all your hard work. None of them are for the health care bill passed last night. They are all deeply concerned and deeply worried about it, and they see it as I see it. They see it as a historic mistake.

Unlike the Social Security bill, the Medicare bill, the Medicaid bill, the civil rights bills of 1957 and 1964 and 1968 and later, all those bills passed with significant bipartisan support. But the bill last night was a com-

pletely partisan act. The only thing bipartisan about it is the opposition to it. I think it is important that we continue to say why that is true.

The fundamental mistake is that the bill basically expands a health care delivery system that we all know is too expensive at a time of enormous concern about the national debt. In the middle of a great recession, we are expanding a health care delivery system that we know is too expensive; instead of focusing our attention and working together to set as a goal of reducing the cost of the health care delivery system so more Americans can afford to buy insurance. That is the basic difference of opinion.

The Democrats believe we should expand the system we have now. Of course, they make some changes, but basically it is an expansion of a system that is too expensive, and they make it more expensive. We believe what we should do, instead, is to reduce the cost of the American health care delivery system, and by doing so make it possible for more Americans to be able to afford health insurance.

Here is what the bill does now, as we see it. It imposes even larger taxes on job creators in the middle of a recession. It will mean Medicare cuts and premium increases for millions of Americans. The Medicare cuts, it is said, are alright because there is some fraud and abuse in Medicare. We agree with that. But what we are saying is that Medicare, according to its trustees, is going broke by 2010, and every penny of savings in Medicare ought to go to Medicare to help make it stronger. This bill spends almost all the money on a new entitlement, and the bill last night cuts Medicare even more deeply.

Some say: Well, it only hurts providers and hospitals. Well, those hospitals are the ones that may announce, as some are announcing, that we are not going to accept Medicare patients anymore because we are already being reimbursed so little. But it also cuts Medicare beneficiaries' benefits. The Congressional Budget Office says that fully half of those who have Medicare Advantage—and that is one out four Medicare beneficiaries in the country—will see their benefits cut. That is what this bill does.

As far as premium increases go, the President and I had a little friendly discussion about that at the health care summit. I said: For millions of Americans, individual premiums would go up. He said: No, they won't. I said: With respect, Mr. President, the Congressional Budget Office says yes, they will, by 10 to 13 percent, on the average. He said: Oh, no, oh, no, they will be getting a better policy. But that is like saying: If the government requires you to buy a better car and it is more expensive, it may be better but it is still more expensive. For a variety of reasons individual premiums are going to go up, and one is the government requirement that you buy a better policy.

Senator COLLINS, who was the insurance commissioner in Maine, has surveyed her State, and her conclusion is that 87 percent of the individual policies there will be more expensive under this bill. It is true that maybe half of those persons would get subsidies—paid for by taxpayers—but that still leaves maybe 40 percent of the individual policies in Maine where individual premiums will go up. They will go up because we are dumping more people into Medicaid—the State program for low-income Americans—and we don't reimburse physicians and hospitals adequately for those patients.

Today, one-half of doctors won't see new Medicaid patients. So what do hospitals and the doctors do when they do see a Medicaid patient? They transfer part of the cost of seeing that patient—that Medicaid patient—on to someone who has private insurance. So that forces premiums to go up.

When you have a provision in the bill, as this bill does, which says that my policy can't go up much when compared with my son's policy, well, that might keep my policy from going up so much, but my son is going to be paying a lot more. So younger Americans are going to be very surprised as the cost of their policies goes up. Then the provision in the bill with the requirement to buy policies was weakened, and because it is weak, a lot of young people especially may not join the policy. When they do not, that will leave sicker and older people within the system, and that will help drive premium costs up as well. So for all those reasons, for millions of Americans, it is accurate to say that premiums will go up.

I was at the University of Tennessee this morning—a tremendous university. Dr. Chu, the President's Energy Secretary, is visiting there today and tomorrow. I wish I could be with him to talk about the work they are doing, between the Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the university and its science program. Senator BINGAMAN has visited there before. But one of the undercurrent stories in America today is the condition of America's public higher education. State funding for public higher education has been flat for the last 10 years.

Why is that? Because Medicaid costs continue to rise. Governors can't control those budgets or control those costs, and the reason they can't is because we write the program up here and then send them about a third to 40 percent of the bill. They cannot afford it, so what do they do? They cut the amount of money that goes to the University of Virginia or the University of Tennessee or the University of New Mexico or the University of Wyoming and then what happens? Either quality goes down, fewer students are served, fewer faculty are attracted or tuition goes up, which is why the students are protesting in California about the 34-percent increase in tuition at the University of California. They probably didn't even imagine the reason for that