

and more disillusioned with the politics that they think is dominated by money and special interests.

Does the Senator from California agree people want to see a piece of legislation passed that has some teeth in it, that will make a difference and provide some protection?

My question is, Do the Senators think this patient protection legislation, what we are trying to do, is a test case as to whether or not the Senate belongs to the insurance companies, or whether or not the Senate belongs to the people in this country?

Is that too stark a contrast, or does it ultimately boil down to that core question?

Mrs. BOXER. I think the Senator has put his finger on it exactly right.

Who is supporting our Patients' Bill of Rights? It is every patient advocacy group, every provider who has an organization, including the nurses and the doctors. And who is on the other side? The insurance companies.

What do we have? Two bills. The bill on our side is supported by these advocacy groups and doctors; the other is supported by the insurance companies.

My friend is right. People are getting so upset that this place seems dominated by the special interests.

I yield the remaining time to my friend from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. I thank the Senator from California.

Let me follow up and perhaps engage in a brief dialog. I think the Senator from Minnesota made a good point about the heart of the Republican legislation. The most telling point, in my view, is the coverage. It simply covers one-third of the eligible private-insured individuals throughout the country.

As I understand the legislation, it is aimed at those self-insurers. These are businesses that contract with HMOs simply to manage the health care of their employees, so the only people who will directly be impacted by their legislation are those individuals who are essentially insured by their employers directly through self-insurance.

Mrs. BOXER. That is correct.

Mr. REED. In a sense, the only protections in the Republican bill are protections for the insurance industry. They are completely without risk. All of their patients, all of the people they directly insure, where they directly assume the risk, are exempt from coverage by this legislation.

The Democratic bill covers all of those who are private-insured HMOs throughout the United States. If the logic is these protections are good enough and necessary enough for those in employer-sponsored self-insured plans, why aren't they good enough, important enough, necessary enough, for those who are direct insurers of HMOs?

The answer, frankly, is that the legislation has been designed to protect the insurance companies from any additional risk. It is fine if we put it on

employers; it is fine if they have to pay extra or if they have to do these things.

However, the only consistent pattern if you look at the coverage, this is not a patients' protection bill; this is an insurance industry protection bill.

I yield to the Senator for her comments.

Mrs. BOXER. It perplexes me that my friends on the other side have a bill that doesn't cover everyone.

It perplexes me it is called the Patients' Bill of Rights. As my friend points out, if you look at the differences, whether it is the appeals process—and my friend last week came to the floor and pointed out that under the Republican proposal it doesn't look as if there is an outside entity looking over the HMO decision but, rather, someone essentially selected by the HMO itself.

I thank my friend for yielding.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). Under the previous order, the time from now until 4:15 shall be under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

#### NATIONAL CHARACTER COUNTS WEEK

Mr. DOMENICI. On behalf of the leader, I ask unanimous consent the Senate now proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 148, S. Res. 98.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative assistant read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 98) designating the week beginning October 17, 1999, and the week beginning October 15, 2000, as "National Character Counts Week."

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, the resolution I have just alluded to is a bipartisan resolution. A number of years ago we started this approach to character education called Character Counts. Senator Nunn was the cosponsor of a resolution that passed the Senate on innumerable occasions, perhaps as many as five times. It declares for all of America that one week during the year will be known as called Character Counts Week.

Frankly, from this Senator's standpoint, we hear so much about what we ought to do and what we can do to help our young people as they grow up in this very difficult society and often very difficult time. We all understand that there are many people who have primary responsibility for our children. We are not in any way talking about negating that primary responsibility, that of relatives and grandparents and mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters to help raise a child with good

values. But we have found, starting about 6 years ago, that the teachers in our public schools have been yearning for something they would like to teach our children that for some reason had been eliminated from both the public and private school agenda. It is sometimes referred to as character education.

I chose to call it "Character Counts" and I chose to speak about a specific program that is being used in many public schools in our country, and certainly in my State of New Mexico, whereby the teachers take six pillars of character and they embrace those within the classroom—on a day-by-day basis, not as a special class. But let me just mention a few of the Character Counts traits that are part of this program and used in many schools.

Let's start with the first one. It is trustworthiness. In some public schools and private schools, especially in the grade schools, for one entire month, the school would promote the idea of trustworthiness by students and teachers, who have lesson plans and programs that articulate what trustworthiness is. They use this with the students, and they from time to time engage in discussions, engage in activities around the school that epitomize trustworthiness. I think we all understand trustworthiness is one of those characteristics and qualities of character that says you should not lie. It says if you agree with somebody to do something, you should live up to your agreement. Trustworthiness has a quality of loyalty to it.

Then maybe the next month, one of the other six pillars would be discussed and woven into the curriculum. The next month, it may very well be "respect." The same kind of thing might happen during that month in some grade school in New Mexico or Idaho or the State of Tennessee or the State of Connecticut, where an awful lot of activity in Character Counts education is taking place.

Maybe the next month it might be the third trait, which is "responsibility," and then maybe the next would be "fairness," and "caring," and "citizenship."

I have been part of this now for a number of years. It is a joy to visit public schools, parochial schools, and other kinds of schools, and visit a class and just talk to the young people about the word of the month; to see the teachers, how excited they are that for that month the children have been talking about responsibility; they have been talking about that in terms of their classmates, their teacher, their responsibilities at home.

Then if you are lucky, you might choose to visit a school at the time once a month when they are having an assembly. During Character Counts assemblies, schools bring all the students together, and they present awards to the students that month who were most responsible. One way of reinforcing the importance of good character is to reward those who did more