

honor and privilege to do that and to have him with us today.

I thank the Chair.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

BIPARTISAN PATIENTS PROTECTION ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of S. 1052 which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1052) to amend the Public Health Service Act and the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to protect consumers in managed care plans and other health coverage.

Pending:

Frist (for Grassley) motion to commit to the Committee on Finance and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions with instructions to report back not later than that date that is 14 days after the date on which this motion is adopted.

Gramm amendment No. 810, to exempt employers from certain causes of action.

Edwards (for McCain/Edwards) amendment No. 812, to express the sense of the Senate with regard to the selection of independent review organizations.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 hours of debate in relation to the Grassley motion to commit and the Gramm amendment No. 810, the time to be equally divided in the usual form.

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I just want to make a brief statement on behalf of Majority Leader DASCHLE. As has been indicated, the resumption of the Patients' Bill of Rights will be the order at hand today. As has been announced, there will be approximately 2 hours of closing debate in relation to the Grassley motion to commit—and I understand he wants to modify his motion.

I ask Senator GRASSLEY, it is my understanding the Senator wants to modify his motion to commit; is that right?

Mr. GRASSLEY. Yes.

Mr. REID. We would not object—and with respect to the Gramm amendment regarding employers. That debate will be ended shortly. There will be two rollcall votes at 11:30 a.m.

I met with Senator DASCHLE early this morning, and he has indicated that without any question we are going to finish the Patients' Bill of Rights before the Fourth of July break.

Now, I would say to everyone within the sound of my voice, I believe we have been on this bill a week. I think we have fairly well defined what the issues are, and I think it would be in

everyone's best interests if today we would decide what those issues are and have amendments offered. If people want time agreements, fine. If they do not, debate them, complete what they want to say, and move on. Everyone has many things to do during the Fourth of July break. But this is important. This bill has been around for 5 years, and we are going to complete consideration of this legislation.

There is also a need to complete the supplemental appropriations bill. As I have indicated before, I think Senator BYRD and Senator STEVENS have done an excellent job in moving that bill along and I think we can do that very quickly. But there are going to be late nights tonight, tomorrow, and Thursday. We are going to do our best to make sure everyone is heard, but also in consideration of other people's schedules, we will do our best to complete action on this legislation as quickly as possible.

I see Senator GREGG, the ranking manager of the bill, is here. I did not see him earlier.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I would like to ask unanimous consent that Senator ENZI be added as a cosponsor of the Gramm amendment which is pending.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GREGG. I thank the Senator.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I hope you will call on the Senator from Texas.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the vote on the Grassley amendment, each side have a total of 3 minutes to summarize the arguments on the amendment excluding employers from liability.

Mr. REID. No objection.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

The Chair hears none, and it is so ordered.

The Senator from Iowa.

MOTION TO COMMIT, AS MODIFIED

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, before I speak on my motion, I ask unanimous consent that the pending motion to commit be modified to reflect the referral of the bill jointly to the Committee on the Judiciary and the same 14-day timeframe that affects the Finance Committee and the HELP Committee also apply to the Judiciary Committee.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

The Chair hears none, and it is so ordered.

The motion to commit, as modified, is as follows:

MOTION TO COMMIT

Mr. Grassley moves to commit the bill S. 1052, as amended, to the Committee on Finance, the Committee on Health, Education,

Labor, and Pensions, and the Committee on the Judiciary with instructions to report the same back to the Senate not later than that date that is 14 (fourteen) days after the date on which this motion is adopted.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I thank the majority for permission to modify my motion.

Mr. President, I rise to speak in favor of my motion to commit the Kennedy-McCain bill to the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Judiciary, and Finance Committees with instructions that these committees report the bill out in 14 days.

On a preliminary note, I thank the good counsel of Senators THOMPSON and HATCH. Yesterday, they reminded me that the Kennedy-McCain bill also includes a series of provisions on liability that fall under Judiciary's jurisdiction and have never been reviewed by that committee either. Thus, I have modified my motion to include the Judiciary Committee along with the HELP and Finance Committees.

I am deeply troubled that the Kennedy-McCain bill has bypassed the relevant committees and has been brought directly to the floor—without one hearing, without one markup, and without public input into this particular bill.

As I made very clear on the floor yesterday, I strongly believe that patient protections are critical to every hard-working American who relies on the managed care system. We need a strong and reliable patients' rights bill and I'm supportive of this effort 100 percent. What we do not need is a bill, like Kennedy-McCain, that exposes employers to unlimited liability, drives up the cost of health insurance, and ultimately increases the number of Americans without health coverage.

Instead, I believe we should protect patients by ensuring access to needed treatments and specialists, by making sure each patient gets a review of any claim that may be denied, and above all by ensuring that Americans' who rely on their employers for health care can still get this coverage. I'm confident these goals can be reached.

However, the very fact that our new leadership brought the Kennedy-McCain legislation directly to the floor without proper committee action, violates the core of the Senate process.

I know my colleagues on the other side will waste no time accusing me of delaying this bill, but the truth is, had the relevant committees been given the opportunity to consider the Kennedy-McCain legislation in the first place, I would not be raising these objections.

By bringing this bill directly to the floor, the message seems to me to be loud and clear: that the new chairmen under the new Democratic leadership are merely speedbumps on the road to the floor.

I guess, as a former chairman who hopes to be chairman again in the near future, I do not particularly enjoy being a speedbump. But there's something much more important at stake—