

Officials, National Association of Development Disabilities Councils, National Association of Mental Health Planning & Advisory Councils, National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems, National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems, National Association of School Nurses, National Association of School Psychologists.

National Association of Social Workers, National Association of State Directors of Special Education, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, National Center for Policy Research for Women & Families, National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, National Coalition for the Homeless, National Coalition of Mental Health Consumers and Professionals, National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, National Council of Jewish Women, National Council of La Raza, National Council on the Aging, National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, National Council on Family Relations, National Council on Problem Gambling, National Council on Suicide Prevention, National Down Syndrome Congress, National Down Syndrome Society, National Eating Disorders Association.

National Educational Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder, National Education Association, National Exchange Club Foundation, National Foundation for Depressive Illness, National Health Council, National Health Law Program, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Hopeline Network, National Housing Conference, National Latino Behavioral Health Association, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, National Leadership on African American Behavioral Health, National League of Cities, National Medical Association, National Mental Health Association, National Mental Health Awareness Campaign, National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, National Network for Youth, National Organization for Rare Disorders.

National Organization of People of Color Against Suicide, National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, National Osteoporosis Foundation, National Partnership for Women and Families, National PTA, National Recreation and Park Association, National Rural Health Association, National Schizophrenia Foundation, National Senior Citizens Law Center, National Therapeutic Recreation Society, National Treatment and Research Advancements Association for Personality Disorder, Native American Counseling Inc., Nebraska Medical Association, NETWORK, a Catholic Social Justice Lobby, Nevada State Medical Association, New Hampshire Medical Society, New Mexico Medical Society, NISH (National Industries for the Severely Handicapped), North American Association of Masters in Psychology, North Carolina Medical Society.

North Dakota Medical Association, Obsessive Compulsive Foundation, Office & Professional Employees International Union, Ohio State Medical Association, Oklahoma State Medical Association, Older Adult Consumer Mental Health Alliance, Oregon Medical Association, Organization of Student Social Workers, Partnership for Recovery, Pennsylvania Medical Society, People For the American Way, People With Disabilities Foundation, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Office, Prevent Child Abuse America, Rebecca Project for Human Rights, Renfrew Center Foundation, Rhode Island Medical Society, Samaritans Suicide Prevention Center, School Social Work Association of America.

Screening for Mental Health, Inc., Service Employees International Union, Shaken Baby Alliance, Sjogren's Syndrome Foundation, Society for Adolescent Medicine, Society for Pediatric Research, Society for Personality Assessment, Society for Public Health Education, Society for Research on Child Development, Society for Social Work Research, Society for Women's Health Research, Society of American Gastrointestinal Endoscopic Surgeons, Society of Medical Consultants to Armed Forces, Society of Professors of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Society of Thoracic Surgeons, South Carolina Medical Association, South Dakota State Medical Association, STOP IT NOW!, Suicide Awareness Voice of Education, Suicide Prevention Action Network USA, Tennessee Medical Association.

Texas Medical Association, The Arc of the United States, Title II Community AIDS National Network, Tourette Syndrome Association, Treatment and Research Advancements Association for Personality Disorder, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, United Cerebral Palsy Association, United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministry, United Jewish Communities, United Methodist General Board of Church and Society, Utah Medical Association, Vermont Medical Society, Volunteers of America, Washington State Medical Association, Wellstone Action, West Virginia State Medical Association, Wisconsin Medical Society, Working Assets, Women of Reform Judaism, Wyoming Medical Society, Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program, Youth Law Center.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business up to the hour of 11:30 a.m., with the first half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee, and the second half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator DASCHLE, I yield 10 minutes to Senator STABENOW, 10 minutes to Senator MURRAY, 10 minutes to Senator DURBIN, and 10 minutes to Senator WYDEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

#### MENTAL HEALTH PARITY

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I first wish to commend our leader, Senator DASCHLE, for his wonderful words regarding the need for mental health parity, and also join with both leaders in remembering Senator Paul Wellstone and his advocacy.

Nothing would be more fitting than to pass this long overdue legislation and dedicate it in his name.

#### HEALTH CARE

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, 24 years ago, Ronald Reagan was running for President and he asked each of us as Americans a question: Are you better off than you were 4 years ago?

It was the right question then, and it is the right question now. Are we better off than we were 4 years ago? This is a very important question. Unfortunately, for most middle-income Americans in 2004, the answer is clearly no.

What has happened in the last 4 years while wages have been flat, gas prices, college tuition, health care costs have skyrocketed, millions of jobs have been lost, poverty is on the rise, the budget surplus has been squandered, the Social Security trust fund has been raided, State taxes have risen, household debt has gone way up, consumer confidence has dropped, and the stock market has gone down.

We can look at a few of these areas with average weekly earnings flat at slightly over 1 percent; gas prices certainly in Michigan and around the country skyrocketing, going up and up; college tuition; family health care premiums—these are just three measures of what is happening to our families and what is commonly called the middle-class squeeze where families are not seeing their incomes go up, and yet all of the costs of providing opportunity for their children, of being able to meet the daily costs of living are going up and up.

Today I want to talk specifically about just one of those, and that is the family health care premiums. Since President Bush took office, family health care premiums have risen more than \$2,700. The average cost of a family plan is now above \$9,000. Workers have to pay about \$2,400 of that premium out of their own pockets, in addition to paying deductibles and copays.

That is a tremendous amount of money for most families, especially at a time when they are facing higher costs in so many other areas. Much of this increase has to do with the soaring cost of prescription drugs, which I have come to the Senate floor to speak about on many occasions. The cost of prescription drugs—and this is brand-name drugs—is rising at about three and a half times the rate of inflation. In fact, we know that for some of the top name-brand drugs we see advertised on television every day, they are actually rising anywhere from 8 to 10 to 12 percent faster than the rate of inflation, which is extraordinary.

The health care system and the business community paying the costs of health care premiums cannot continue to absorb that, and the Medicare prescription drug benefit does next to nothing to rein in escalating costs. In fact, researchers have suggested that the new Medicare law will actually result in new profits for the drug companies of \$139 billion over the next 8 years.

So here we are supposedly passing a bill to help seniors that one would hope would lower prices, but instead, because it does not allow Medicare to negotiate group discounts, it locks in up to 40 million people forced to pay the highest possible prices in the country,