

said that for the first two hurricanes, we are going to have \$2 billion of losses just in agriculture. Yet all we have announced out of that \$2 billion requested by the Commissioner of Agriculture—who happens to be in the same party as the President—all we have seen is the Secretary of Agriculture offer a package that is only one quarter of what the Commissioner of Agriculture of Florida has asked for. That is just not going to do it.

Since the first two hurricanes, we have been hit by a third hurricane and, a day ago, by a fourth hurricane. In that third hurricane, there is going to be a big loss of the cotton and peanut crops up in the panhandle. With the fourth, what was left of the citrus crop across central Florida is going to be all gone because these ferocious winds are going to drop to the ground any fruit that was remaining. This is an election year, but this should not be partisan.

People are hurting and they need help, they need it now. I ask the White House, this administration, the Department of Agriculture, and all those myriad of agencies to come forward and help us. We need that help right now.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, how much time am I allotted?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa has 19½ minutes.

Mr. HARKIN. I thank the Chair.

#### HEALTH CARE

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I want to talk a little about Iraq. Before that, I have a responsibility to respond to the majority leader's comments on health care today. Sometimes you hear things on the Senate floor and you have to stop and say, did I really hear that or is that just something I thought?

I was really listening to the Republican leader talk about Republican support for health care—meaningful health care. Listening to the Republican leader talk about Republican support for meaningful health care is like listening to the big tobacco companies talk about the need for cancer research. How do I say that? Because the problems of cancer basically are caused by the big tobacco companies. The problem that we don't have a meaningful health care system in America today—people-based, patient-based, preventive care-based—is because of Republican Party policies.

It has been very clear for a long time that the Republican Party has opposed any kind of meaningful people-based health care program. After all, it was our colleague, former Senator Robert Dole, who during his Presidential campaign in 1996 bragged he had voted against Medicare, as most Republicans did in the mid 1960s. Now, again, the majority leader says that the elderly

are not signing up for these discount cards and we ought to be promoting them, sort of like a cheerleader. Maybe they are all taking their cue from the fact that President Bush was a cheerleader in college, so now we have to be a cheerleader. We heard that we have to cheerlead, regardless of what the facts are. There is a reason the elderly are not signing up for this card. It is meaningless. It doesn't do anything for them. Yet we are supposed to go out and be a cheerleader for them?

Well, the Republicans rammed through their health care program. The elderly get a meaningless card, and the pharmaceutical companies got \$12 billion in payments to entice them into this program. How about giving the elderly in our country \$12 billion?

I sum it up by saying that President Bush does have—I want to be fair to him—a health care plan. It is very simple and straightforward: Pray you don't get sick. That is President Bush's health care plan.

JOHN KERRY has a sound health care plan: One, to overturn the ban on Medicare bidding down the prices from pharmaceutical companies. Again, that was in our last Medicare bill. Republicans insisted on it. They pushed it through. Right now, Medicare cannot bargain with the large pharmaceutical companies to bid down the prices. Why? Because they are paying in the bill and they are forbidden to do so. What kind of sense does that make? The Veterans' Administration can bargain down the price of drugs with pharmaceutical companies but not Medicare. That makes no sense.

One of the first things a President KERRY would do is get rid of that ban and let Medicare get the price of drugs down for the elderly.

Secondly, a President KERRY will say we have to allow for the reimportation of drugs from Canada. We have a free-trade agreement with them on cars, clothes, pens, ties, and everything else, except for one thing—drugs. Well, it is time we have a free-trade agreement on drugs and let us reimport drugs from Canada.

The third part of the Kerry program is to provide a tax credit for small businesses—up to 50 percent—so they can carry a health care policy on their workers. That is so important for us in rural America, where most of our people work for small business.

Fourth, Senator KERRY says we ought to open the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program to everybody in America. That is a good program. It allows you to pick your doctor and hospital, and it allows you to change your plan if you would like to do so. It is a great program. I ought to know, I am in it. So is President Bush. So is Vice President CHENEY. So is every Senator on this floor. If it is good enough for us, it ought to be good enough for the American people.

The last thing in the Kerry program for health care is to double the National Health Service Corps to get

more doctors, physicians' assistants, nurse practitioners, and others serving in our rural and underserved areas and to increase the number of community health centers in America.

So while I am proud JOHN KERRY has a forward-looking, comprehensive health care plan that will be meaningful, that will reduce drug prices, and that will get affordable, reliable health care to the American people, President Bush is silent. Again, President Bush's health care plan is simple: Pray you don't get sick. That is not enough. We need better than that.

#### IRAQ

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I also wish to speak for a few minutes about the mess in Iraq. Last week, Prime Minister Iyad Allawi came to Washington to join in President Bush's campaign of relentless happy talk about the war in Iraq. President Bush says:

We're making progress. We're making progress.

Meanwhile, back in the real world—the world that American soldiers confront on the ground in Iraq—the chaos gets worse and worse. Entire regions and many provincial capitals are under the insurgents' control. Virtually every day we see car bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, beheadings.

As we learned last week, the CIA has produced a formal National Intelligence Estimate that says that, at best, the current level of violence will continue and, at worst, Iraq will plunge into a civil war. As Secretary of State Colin Powell acknowledged yesterday, it is getting worse in Iraq. But amazingly, President Bush insists that this mess in Iraq has made us safer, and the President and his political allies have been relentless in using the war on terror for their own electoral purposes.

Their message to the American people is simple: Be afraid, President Bush will protect you; his opponent will not.

Vice President DICK CHENEY also took this line of attack 2 weeks ago when he darkly warned with his Darth Vader-type voice that if JOHN KERRY is elected President, then "the danger is we'll get hit again, that we'll be hit in a way that will be devastating." That was Vice President CHENEY.

Last Tuesday, the senior Senator from Utah, Mr. HATCH, said that terrorists "are going to throw everything they can between now and the election to try and elect Kerry."

Last Monday, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said terrorists in Iraq "are trying to influence the election against President Bush."

If these gentlemen have such excellent access to the terrorists' thoughts, they are not doing a good job of turning that knowledge into effective policy against the terrorists. At key junctures, this administration has made disastrously wrong choices. Repeatedly, these decisions have played into the terrorists' hands. Let's look at the record.