

thing. Why would we not want to capture the best aspect of the American consumer, which is discernment?

Not long ago I was sitting with some friends and put forth the fact that I believe Americans are smart enough to know what they want in health care. The idea got pooh-poohed. I thought, how insulting. We can figure out what computer to buy and how much memory we want and how big a hard drive we want and whether we want a photo section on it or a print lab. We can figure out all of those things—as a matter of fact, our 10-year-old kids can figure that out—but we can't figure out how to buy health care. We are going to say to the American people: You are not sophisticated enough, you are not smart enough to know what is good for you or to know what you need. So, therefore, the Government is going to tell you what you need. That is what we have today, whether it is the Government or your employer or somewhere else.

This bill changes all that. This is a bill that will create transparency so you as a consumer can know what something is going to cost. It is going to create a situation where you can perceive whether you have value. It is going to create an incentive to save for health care for the future and an incentive for wellness, not just by what the insurance company will come to sell you but by the \$20 billion that we are now spending, of which less than \$2 or \$3 billion makes any difference at all in somebody's health care. We are going to focus that on true prevention. We are going to direct that the HHS relook at every one of these programs and develop a model to where we educate the American people about the risk.

Let me give a personal story. I am a colon cancer survivor. What we do know is with good prevention and good screening, one out of every two people who are going to get colon cancer we can keep from getting it. Why wouldn't we do that? Why wouldn't we prevent half the colon cancer in this country? We don't have a good reason. One of the reasons is because we have an ineffective prevention program.

I am a small government person; I admit that. But there is a legitimate role for the Federal Government when it comes to teaching America about our health needs, prevention, and wellness. We have plenty of money to do it if we take the same money we have now and redirect it in a way that educates the American people. Innovation works. We know that. Competition works.

Take, for example, a year ago a 46-inch plasma TV cost \$11,526. Today you can buy the same thing for \$2,300. Next year you will be able to buy it for \$1,400. The next year you will be able to buy it for \$700. Why? Competition. Competition breeds quality and value, only if you have a market under which you can operate. We don't have that today in health care. Innovation also works in health care.

Look at Lasik. Here is a procedure that is not paid for by the Government. It is not paid for by any of the insurance industry. But if you are near-sighted and you want to be able to look far away, you can get that done. When it first started, it was \$4,000 an eye. Now there are places you can get it done—the same piece of equipment, the same computer—for \$500 an eye. Why won't that work? It will work in health care. It will work. Innovation will come as a result of that.

What happens when we innovate. What we get is better quality at a lower price and better value. I am hopeful that as the American people look at this, they will be reminded of a couple things. This is universal coverage. Everybody in America gets treated the same by the Federal Government when it comes to health care. Everybody in America is on equal footing as far as the Income Tax Code is concerned when you go to buy your health care. No longer do we advantage the very rich with \$2,700 a year in tax benefit and the very poor with \$100. We totally neutralize that and say: Everybody ought to be treated the same under the Tax Code for health care. It is universal coverage.

No. 2, it takes away discrimination. Because you are poor, because you don't have the ability to have a job that has insurance coverage today, and if, in fact, you are at 133 percent of poverty, why should you be discriminated against because you are on the Medicaid Program? This is no offense to any practicing professional out there because there are great professionals who are taking care of Medicaid patients. But if you look at the marketeering, the ones with the best doctors, as a rule, because Medicaid pays so low, do they have time to take care of Medicaid patients? No. What happens is, somehow they don't have time. So what we have done is discriminated down with Medicaid patients.

Why shouldn't a Medicaid patient get the best doctor every time, just like a Senator? Why shouldn't they have access to capability? Why should they be discriminated against by having a Medicaid stamp on their forehead? We are talking about universal access, equality of care, and personal freedom and choice. You get to decide what is best for you and your health care and your family.

By the way, when you get this money and you haven't spent it all, you get to save it for next year and the year after and the year after. You can buy what is best for you with that money.

This money also goes to retirees. If you retire at 60 and are not eligible for Medicare, you still get your tax credit. We don't discriminate against anybody. Everybody gets the tax credit.

The final thing I would say, it doesn't cost the American taxpayer one additional dollar in income tax. There will be no increased cost with this plan. Actually, we have tried to

make it revenue neutral. My worry is that it will save us money. We have tried to make it where it does not. We have tried to make it the most generous thing we can to get the most coverage for everybody out there. Again, prevention first, free choice, freedom, and liberty. You get to decide who cares for you, what insurance, what hospital, and every American gets that. It is the Government not telling you what you must do but saying here is what you can do if you want.

I yield to the Senator from North Carolina if he has any additional comments.

Mr. BURR. I would only use that time to thank the Senator from Oklahoma. This is a crucial debate that this country needs to have, this institution needs to have. More importantly, we are at a point where we have to stop talking about what we are going to do and actually start doing something. The Senator from Oklahoma has stated it very well. What we can do is bring a higher level of care to all Americans—not just some Americans, to all Americans. Through that effort, all Americans receive a financial benefit. Our system prospers because we are able to take care of more, and we are able to provide an unlimited opportunity in the future because we unleash innovation and technology in health care.

I have wondered what it would be like if we had innovation at the same level in health care as, say, in cell phones; that we would have a new platform every 6 years, and that platform would provide an array of opportunities to us that we are not forced to take, but they are available to us if, in fact, we want them. Health care has been starved of innovation, in large measure because it treats every American differently. This is the first real opportunity for universal coverage, universal access, where every American has an opportunity at the best coverage available.

I thank the Senator from Oklahoma. Mr. COBURN. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RENO-TAHOE YOUNG PROFESSIONALS NETWORK

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the Reno-Tahoe Young Professionals Network, RYPN. This important organization has been formed recently by local community leaders and will provide a significant service to northern Nevada. I am pleased to recognize the group here today.

The Reno-Tahoe area has been growing swiftly for the past decade. The region enjoys a strong and relatively diverse economy, offering a range of jobs

and professional opportunities. Reno-Tahoe also offers a wonderful quality of life and some of the finest recreational opportunities in the Nation.

Despite the overall growth and undeniable lures to the region, it has not succeeded as well in attracting and retaining young professionals, a demographic critical to its continued and future economic growth. To address this issue, the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada, EDawn—through the leadership of Chuck Alvey, Michael Thomas, and consultant Stacey Crowley—wisely recognized the need to provide young local professionals with an opportunity to meaningfully engage with regional business and community leaders and participate in directing the region's future.

Toward that end, EDawn launched the RTYPN, an organization designed to teach valuable skills, provide networking and leadership opportunities and participate in the regional discussion about how to capitalize on the region's assets to grow a better community and economy for the future. With the partnership of organizations such as EDawn and the Reno Sparks Chamber of Commerce, the creation of RTYPN shows the vision and resourcefulness of the Reno-Tahoe community and I am eager to learn of RTYPN's future successes.

NATIVE HAWAIIAN GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION ACT

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, on January 17, 2007, Senator INOUE and I introduced S. 310, the Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act of 2007 to extend the Federal policy of self-governance and self-determination to Hawaii's indigenous people. This measure is of critical importance to the people of Hawaii. It would, at long last, clarify the existing legal and political relationship of Native Hawaiians with the United States, allowing for the formation of a government-to-government relationship.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am very well aware of the support of the Senator from Hawaii for this measure and his determination to see it enacted. As a result of the hard work by Senator AKAKA as well as his colleague, Senator INOUE, on behalf of this legislation, every Member of this body should know how important this bill is to the people of Hawaii.

Mr. INOUE. I thank the Senator for his recognition of our continuing perseverance and unwavering resolve to move this measure forward. At its core, S. 310 is about equity. It is about establishing parity in the Federal policies towards Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. Our U.S. Constitution is clear in the means by which it addresses the status of the indigenous, native people of this land. It is a status based not on consideration of race or ethnicity, but rather on the political relationship that existed between the United States and the native

people who occupied and exercised sovereignty over lands that later became part of the United States.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, the senior Senator from Hawaii is absolutely correct, and I appreciate both his comments and that of our majority leader about my efforts to date. I first introduced this bill, together with the members of Hawaii's Congressional Delegation, in 1999. And, I have introduced a similar bill every Congress. In each Congress, the bill has been favorably reported by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and its companion measure has been favorably reported by the House Committee on Natural Resources.

During the 109th Congress, Senator INOUE and I were successful in filing a cloture motion to proceed to the bill. This procedural action required 60 votes to bring the bill, S. 147, to the Senate floor for a full debate and vote. Falling four votes short of the required 60 votes, cloture was not invoked. As a result, the Senate has not yet voted on the substance and merits of this bill. In fact, the cloture vote demonstrated that if the measure was considered on an up-or-down vote, the votes are here to pass it by a simple majority.

Senator INOUE and I are currently working to have S. 310 considered by the Senate Indian Affairs Committee in the near future, and brought to the Senate floor shortly thereafter. In the U.S. House of Representatives, the companion measure, H.R. 505, was scheduled for markup by the House Natural Resources Committee, but Hawaii Congressman ABERCROMBIE was not able to be present. At Congressman ABERCROMBIE's request, H.R. 505 is being rescheduled for committee consideration shortly.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, through his position on the Indian Affairs Committee, the senior Senator from Hawaii has demonstrated leadership on and knowledge of Indian issues. He has been second to no Member in this body with his empathetic advocacy for fair and equitable treatment of Native Americans. I can clearly understand what drives both Hawaii Senators to secure some measure of fairness and self-determination for the indigenous people of their beautiful home State. Senator AKAKA's description of events here in the Senate culminating with a failed cloture vote was accurate.

However, I want to be very clear to every Member of this body: As a Senator from Nevada, I strongly support S. 310. As majority leader, I am committed to ensuring Senate consideration of S. 310 and will work with the Senators from Hawaii to gain the support of members from both sides of the aisle. This is my commitment to the gentlemen from Hawaii.

Mr. INOUE. We thank you, the leader. Native Hawaiian programs and institutions continue to be under attack in the courts. Hence, there is an urgency to act and to clarify that the status of Native Hawaiians is a polit-

ical question best left to the political arena, namely the Congress, to resolve.

Mr. AKAKA. I deeply appreciate the leader's commitment and support. Hawaii is the only homeland of the Native Hawaiian people, and I remain committed to empowering the people of Hawaii and our Nation to preserve a Hawaii that respects Native Hawaiians and the contributions made by those who have made Hawaii their home.

BUDGET RESOLUTION

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I voted against the budget resolution for the 2008 fiscal year because it contained record-breaking tax increases on hard-working American families in a time when we should be putting more money back into the pockets of taxpayers, not taking it out. This year's budget resolution is historical because it proposes the largest tax increase ever—\$916 billion in tax increases on the backs of the American people. This is almost four times the amount of the second largest tax hike in history, \$240 billion proposed in 1993. By letting progrowth tax policies expire, this resolution reaches deep into the pockets of hard-working families and seeks to reduce the take-home pay of a family of four earning \$50,000 by as much as 6 percent.

Additionally, this budget ignores the concerns of future generations. Proposed tax hikes would slow the economy, and stifle investment and job creation. Since 2003, over 7 million new jobs have been created. The U.S. economy is experiencing 5 uninterrupted years of growth, and since the tax cuts of 2003, the rate of economic growth has more than doubled. Tax increases move us in the wrong direction and that is why I am opposing this budget resolution—because it is wrong for the economy, wrong for hard-working families, and wrong for America.

Despite the inclusion of funding for several essential programs in this budget resolution, it is imperative that we realize the effect of this proposal as a whole. When we examine closely the entire package, it is clear that the tax increases on Americans included in this budget will serve to stunt our continued economic growth. Therefore, I opposed this budget resolution. We simply cannot afford to appease short-term priorities at the expense of long-term stability and prosperity. The success of our economy depends on and demands from us fair tax policies which enable hard-working Americans to prosper, leading us as a country to fiscal stability.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT WAYNE R. CORNELL

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Army SGT Wayne R. Cornell of Holstein, NE.

Sergeant Cornell will be remembered as a dedicated husband and father.