

somebody like Ahmadi-Nejad—was a startling failure of leadership at the university by the president of the university.

As an alumni, I was embarrassed, to put it quite simply. I was embarrassed by the fact that they would choose to give this individual such a forum, this individual who will probably, for my children, my children's children, and maybe even our generation, be the most significant threat to world peace that we have as soon as he develops his nuclear weapon, which he is on course to do, and then to compound that by setting up the forum in a way where the president of the university basically went way beyond what would be considered to be a coherent and thoughtful and balanced approach to addressing this individual. It would have been much more effective had the president of the university simply allowed the President of Iran to make his statement and, by his own statement, indict himself because that is exactly what he would have done, and he did. But, unfortunately, rather than the President of Iran becoming the issue, which he should be, the president of the university made himself part of the story and the issue.

It was not a good day for Columbia or for alumni of Columbia, in my humble opinion, and it speaks volumes about the level to which the universities in our country, especially those which proclaim themselves elite, have sunk in the area of setting up open and free dialog because, as I said, as has been seen in various universities across this country, conservative thought would not have been given the type of forum this militaristic individual, whose purpose it is to essentially destabilize the world through the use of nuclear weapons, was given. Others would not be given such a forum.

So it is with regret that I rise today to ask why—again, why—why did Columbia pursue this course and why did the president of the university pursue the course he pursued in responding to the attendance of the President of Iran on his campus?

I yield the floor.

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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, on behalf of the leader, I ask unanimous consent that the time for morning business be extended to 11:45 a.m. today under the same conditions and limitations as previously ordered.

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

REAUTHORIZATION OF CHIL- DREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a very impor-

tant and very positive issue we are going to be addressing and sending to the President this week; that is, the reauthorization of the children's health care program. This is really a historic, bipartisan effort that has been put together, and it is something we have done together for all of our families and children across America.

We urgently need to pass this bill in its final form and send it to the President of the United States. I know the House of Representatives is doing that today, and it will then come to us. There is no question that it is one of the most important things we will do this year, not only guaranteeing that some 6 million children who currently receive this children's health care program will be able to continue to get health care, but we will be expanding upwards of another 4 million children who will be able to have the health care they need and deserve.

I wish to particularly thank leaders on the Finance Committee, including Senator BAUCUS, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator ROCKEFELLER, and Senator HATCH, for working together in such a wonderful way that has given us the opportunity in the Senate to come together, with the original vote on the bill being 68 Members of the Senate—68 Members of the Senate. In addition to that, we are so thrilled to have Senator JOHNSON back with us so that his vote will be added as well to this very important program.

I also thank our leader, Senator HARRY REID, for making this a top priority and for personally engaging in the negotiations that took place to be able to get us to the point where we have something on which we can move forward in the House and the Senate in a bipartisan way.

This really builds on the bipartisan spirit that created the whole program in 1997. I was in the U.S. House of Representatives representing mid-Michigan at the time and felt that as we put this program together then, it was an incredibly important statement of our values and our priorities. We are talking about working families, moms and dads who go to work every day to maybe one, two, or three jobs who are trying to hold things together and desperately want to make sure their children have the health care they need. That is what this legislation is all about. That is what this program is all about.

Among many good things that have been placed into this bipartisan legislation, I am very proud to say that it makes important improvements in dental care and in mental health care for children. It looks at quality issues and health information technology. I am very pleased that language which I authored concerning creating an electronic medical record for children, a pediatric electronic medical record, is in this legislation so that we can bring children's information together around immunizations and other kinds of health care needs in one place so we

can more effectively have them treated and have doctors and hospitals knowing what, in fact, a child's medical record is. I am also very pleased about another piece of the legislation I worked on in relation to school-based health centers and the importance of recognizing them as part of a continuum of care for children.

This bill really does represent a very successful public sector and private sector partnership that helps our families and makes sure more children, children of working families, are able to get health care in this country. In my State of Michigan, a private insurer runs what we call the MICHild Program. Last year, nearly one-third of the children in Michigan relied on either Healthy Kids through Medicaid for low-income children or MICHild, which represents working families, for health care coverage. About three-quarters of the children have at least one working parent. I must say that oftentimes that is mom—mom trying to, again, work one job or two jobs or three jobs, desperately concerned about her children, needing to put food on the table, needing to buy them school clothes, needing to get them what they need to be able to survive and function every day, and knowing that when they desperately need to go to the dentist, they are able to get a dental checkup, or to be able to get basic kinds of health care.

I know too many people who tell me they go to bed at night saying: Please, God, don't let the kids get sick. This program in Michigan, MICHild, and this program which we are now coming together on a bipartisan basis to expand says to those parents: Somebody is hearing you; that we as a country and as a Congress care about the children of this country and making sure they have their health care needs met.

It is so important to stress that this is not a program for wealthy families, for rich kids. We have heard so much misinformation about what this program is all about. In Michigan, a family of four cannot make over \$40,000 to qualify for MICHild. This is, again, a family of four. If there are two working parents, working just barely above poverty level, this allows them to be able to get the health insurance they need for their children.

The Saginaw-based Center for Civil Justice shared a story with me about a young mother named Christie whose husband was laid off and the family income dropped to less than \$2,000 a month for a family of five—less than \$24,000 a year for a family of five. Nearly half of that goes to rent and utilities, like most families. The children's health care program in Michigan, MICHild, has helped their three children, who are 4 years old, 3 years old, and 8 months. Thankfully, they have been able to—in Michigan, we have had a dental benefit, which is something we are going to provide through this bill. Without that, Christie's children would not have what they need.

Recently, one of the children needed to have their tonsils removed. I remember those days with my children. It would not have been able to be done—it could have turned into a much more serious situation for that child—if it was not for the children's health care program. It makes a difference in children's lives every day.

Another mom, Pam, is a full-time preschool teacher and mother. Her monthly premiums of \$384 per month, or over \$4,500 per year, would have taken up a fifth of her pay if she was trying to pay through a private individual plan.

But through MICild, she was able to get the specialized care she needed for her daughter, who suffers from a rare seizure disorder. She would not have been able to care for her daughter if it were not for the children's health care program.

Like Pam, most working families simply cannot afford traditional health insurance and make ends meet—to be able to pay rent, utilities, a mortgage payment, or purchase food and school clothes, and, on top of that, find an individual policy that is affordable in the private market. According to the Commonwealth Fund, nearly three-quarters of people living below 200 percent of the poverty line found it very difficult or impossible to find affordable coverage in the individual market. Premiums for individual market coverage for families with incomes between 100 percent of poverty and 199 percent of poverty—which is what we are talking about and what we have in Michigan—on average, one-quarter of the family's total income—25 percent—would be premiums for health care in the private market. Faced with these costs, many families just don't have the coverage because they cannot afford to do it and at the same time put food on the table. The situation is even worse for families with chronic conditions, such as asthma or juvenile diabetes. If they were able to purchase coverage in the individual market, costs would be much higher.

The children's health program, it is important to note, is not just for kids in cities, it is not just an urban program. This program helps all children regardless of where they live. In fact, according to the Carsey Institute, they found that there were more children in rural areas who were benefiting from the Children's Health Insurance Program than in urban areas—32 percent of rural children versus 26 percent of urban children. So this really is something that touches every single part of the country, every single part of our States, and families all throughout America who are working hard every day and counting on us to help them to be able to get the children's health care they need.

We are taking a huge step forward for our Nation's uninsured children, the vast majority of whom—78 percent—live in working families. Seventy-eight percent live in a home where mom and/

or dad is working, but they are not making enough to be able to afford private premiums in the private individual market. Because the importance of the children's health care program is so critical for so many families, I urge my colleagues not to listen to inaccurate statements or negative attacks but to join together, as we have done, in a wonderful bipartisan effort in the Senate to send a very strong message to this President that we come together on behalf of the children and the working families of America to put our values and priorities in the right place. That is what we are talking about here. This is about choices, about values, about priorities.

This bill is totally in line with what President Bush proposed at the 2004 Republican Convention. He said at that time:

In a new term, we will lead an aggressive effort to enroll millions of poor children who are eligible but not signed up for Government health insurance programs. We will not allow a lack of attention, or information, to stand between these children and the health care they need.

Well, Mr. President, this bipartisan compromise, this bipartisan victory which has been put together in the Congress is an aggressive effort to enroll millions of poor children into a successful public-private partnership. This bill before us is a chance to make a real difference in the lives of millions of children—millions of children who, without us and the children's health care program, will not have that chance.

We need to do the right thing. Every day, as we wait, children are growing; they don't wait for us. They keep on growing whether we are debating, whether we are in committee meetings. Regardless of what we are doing, the children of America keep on growing. They keep on having needs—dental or broad health care needs or mental health needs. It is time to do the right thing. We have it within our grasp. A tremendous amount of hard work has gone into this. Let's remember the bipartisan spirit that created this great program in 1997. Let's remember that the Children's Health Insurance Program is truly a great American success story for which we can all take credit. We can join together in taking credit for it.

Let's pass this bill and, most importantly, let's together urge the President of the United States to do the right thing on behalf of the children of America.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I thank Senator STABENOW, my friend from Michigan, for the comments about children's health. She is right-on about that. Look at the choice. We are going to spend \$2.5 billion a week in Iraq. Yet we are unwilling per year to spend \$7 billion to insure 4 million additional

children—some 75,000 in my State and 50,000 or 60,000 in the State of Michigan next door. We are spending \$2.5 billion a week in Iraq. Yet the President says he is going to say no and veto this bill on children's health.

TRADE POLICY

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, our Nation's haphazard trade policy has done plenty of damage to Ohio's economy, to our workers, to our manufacturers, and to our small businesses. Recent news reports of tainted foods and toxic toys reveal another hazard of ill-conceived and unenforced trade rules. They subject American families and children to products that can harm them, that in some cases have even killed them.

From pet food to toothpaste, from tires to toys, news stories almost every day highlight the consequences of our Nation's failed trade policy. Countries such as China lack basic protections we have come to take for granted. Given the well-known dangers of lead, particularly for young children, our Government banned it from products such as gasoline and paint in the 1970s. Yet our trade policy is turning back the clock on the hard-fought safety standards that keep our families and our children safe.

What happens should come as no surprise. When we trade the way we do, when we bought \$288 billion of products from the People's Republic of China last year and \$288 billion this year—it will probably exceed \$300 billion—and we are trading with a country that doesn't have close to the same safety standards for its own workers or safe air or drinking water standards for its own water, why would we expect them to sell safe products to our country?

It is compounded by the fact that companies, such as Mattel say to the Chinese contractors: We want you to cut costs. Lead paint? Use it; it is cheaper. Cut corners so we can save money.

It is no surprise because American corporations have pushed the Chinese to cut costs, and at the same time China doesn't have fair labor standards, clean air, and safe drinking water standards for their own people. Of course they are going to sell products back to our country such as contaminated toothpaste and pet food and dangerous toys with lead-based paint on those products.

Our trade policy should prevent these problems, not invite them. Despite the real and present danger from Chinese imports, we must not focus solely on consumer threats from China. The real threat is our failed trade policy that allows recall after recall. The real threat is our failure to change course and craft a new, very different trade policy. The real threat is this administration's insistence on more of the same—more trade pacts that send U.S. jobs overseas, more trade pacts that allow companies and countries to ignore the rules of fair trade, more trade