

had been disclosed to the public for review.

At the time, I argued that spending this much borrowed money in the middle of a recession on a bill that had been rushed to the floor was extremely irresponsible. At a time when millions were struggling to make ends meet, Washington had no business borrowing hundreds of billions of dollars to pay for government golf carts and ATV trails in the name of economic stimulus. This week, Senator COBURN has catalogued some of the other outrages that are contained in this bill. Here are just a few:

The town of Union, NY, received a \$578,000 grant that it didn't request for a homeless problem it claims it does not have. Florida is planning to spend \$3.4 million in stimulus money to build a 13-foot turtle tunnel at Lake Jackson. That is more than a quarter of a million dollars per foot. This one takes the cake. In North Carolina, \$40,234 in Federal stimulus money will pay for the salary—the salary—of someone whose job is to lobby for more stimulus money. That is \$40,234 to pay someone to lobby for more stimulus money.

This would be comical if it weren't so maddening and if these projects hadn't been sold to the American people as the answer to our economic problems and if the administration hadn't assured us it would make sure every cent of this money was spent efficiently and without waste. But that was then.

The administration had promised since January it would keep an eye on how precious tax dollars were spent. But just months after the stimulus was signed into law, it was already admitting funds would be wasted and people were being scammed.

In January and February, administration economists took to the talk shows promising that the stimulus would create 3 to 4 million jobs. They said that if we passed the stimulus, the unemployment rate would now be about 8 percent. But just a few months later, with job losses continuing to mount, the administration admits their early predictions were simply a guess and that they guessed wrong. Today, the unemployment rate stands at 9.4 percent. Just yesterday, the administration said it expects unemployment to climb even higher.

The \$1 trillion they said was absolutely necessary to jump-start the economy, and which was put on a fast track by an eager-to-please, Democratically led Congress, is now being called a very bad guess by the very people who proposed it.

Now they are asking us to do it again, only this time it is even more than \$1 trillion, and the consequences could be far worse.

The early estimates we are getting for the health care proposal we have seen are that a portion of it—just a portion of it—will be \$1.3 trillion. This figure, staggering in itself, doesn't even account for the money that would be needed to pay for expanding Med-

icaid and creating a new government-run plan. No one can tell us where any of this money will come from.

Yet similar to the stimulus, we are being told, in the most urgent tones, that this government takeover of health care is absolutely necessary, and we have to approve it as soon as possible, without review, without knowing the full cost, and without knowing how it will affect people's lives. Once again, it is rush and spend and rush and spend and a tidal wave of debt.

Everyone in America knows health care reform is needed in this country, but they want us to do it right. They do not want a blind rush to spend trillions—trillions—of dollars in the hope that the administration gets it right. During the debate over the stimulus, we were told we had to pass it right away, with just 24 hours to review—or \$42 billion an hour—for the sake of the economy. Now we are being told we need to approve a particular set of health care reforms for the sake of the economy, but we have no bill. We have no idea of its total cost. Yet it is rush, rush, rush.

We have heard all this before. We have made this mistake already. Americans will not be rushed into another one. Americans do want health care reform, but they want the right reform, not a government takeover disguised as a reform that takes away the care they have, replaces it with something worse, and costs untold trillions that they and their grandchildren will have to pay through higher taxes and even more debt.

The administration admits it made a mistake on its predictions about the stimulus. We shouldn't make the same mistake again when it comes to health care.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

The Senator from Arizona.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, as we all know, health care dominates the agenda and the thoughts and efforts of the Congress of the United States, and it has to be addressed. It is a historic opportunity to achieve the health re-

forms Americans need today more than ever. We need fundamental reforms—reforms that not only help people get affordable health care coverage but reforms that bring down the cost of health care.

Given the enormous cost associated with the bill that has been proposed, I have called on the other side to scrap the bill and start from scratch. We have to get it right. It shouldn't be a partisan process that forces a bad bill through committee. In starting over, we must address the fundamental components of health care reform, including the major drivers of increasing health care costs.

One of the main factors keeping health care cost trends too high is defensive medicine. Many medical practitioners order additional procedures for fear of litigation, which drives up the medical malpractice insurance costs faced by so many in the medical profession. Medical liability insurance is a direct result of out-of-control lawsuits that force physicians to practice defensive medicine to avoid these often costly and baseless liability lawsuits. Any legislation reforming our health care system is incomplete if it doesn't address this important issue.

A 2003 HHS report estimated the cost of defensive medicine to be between \$70 billion and \$126 billion a year. Put that in the light of the report that is in the Washington Post this morning, which states that CBO says Obama's health plan needs spending controls. It goes on to say of President Obama's plan to expand health coverage to the uninsured:

It is likely to dig the Nation deeper into debt unless policymakers adopt politically painful controls on spending, such as sharp reductions in payments to doctors, hospitals and other providers.

There is a way to save about \$100 billion a year—\$100 billion a year. Because if it were updated, the cost estimate would likely increase to \$100 billion to \$180 billion a year. Where is it in this bill? It is nowhere. It is nowhere. That is a testament to trial lawyers of America.

On Monday, before a receptive crowd at the American Medical Association, the President stuck his toe in the medical liability reform waters by acknowledging that medical liability reform is real. But the President also took caps on noneconomic damages off the table by saying:

Don't get too excited yet, just hold onto your horses here, guys . . . I want to be honest with you, I'm not advocating caps on malpractice awards.

This all but ensures that meaningful reform won't happen. Today, the Wall Street Journal stated in an opinion piece:

President Obama mentioned the medical liability problem and . . . we suppose this is progress [but] Mr. Obama's [call] might have had more credibility had he not specifically ruled out the one policy to deter frivolous suits.

Without caps on medical malpractice awards, "the tort lottery will continue."