MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mrs. MURRAY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, we have been waiting for many weeks while the Democratic leadership worked behind closed doors to write a new health care reform bill. Rather than trying to build consensus for a bill that could get broad-based support, they did not even wait until long past this new health care reform plan is finally public. They have come forward to at last reveal the legislative language for a health care reform bill that the Democrats intend to bring to the floor.

We know where they started. We know the changes they made along the way. Those in this Chamber will recall that we worked for months in the Senate Finance Committee on health care reform. Those in this Chamber will recall the Democrats intend to bring to the floor a bill that will make permanent changes to our system of health care. Those in this Chamber will recall the Democrats intend to bring to the floor a bill that could get broad-based support, rather we have been waiting for many weeks to see if the Democrats' legislation will pass. Rather than waiting for months, we have been waiting for many weeks to see if the Democrats' legislation will pass. Rather than asking why we get health care reform, we are now asking why we get health care reform.

TheAssistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Senator Baucus and I worked very carefully in committee to try to develop a bipartisan reform plan.

Health care, as everybody knows, is one-sixth of the economy. If that economic fact is obscure to people, $1 out of every $6 in the United States is spent on health care.

We are, of course, to spend upward of $33 trillion on health care in this country over the next decade—$33 trillion. Already our health care system is on an unsustainable path. Our current health care entitlement programs, at least the two, Medicare and Medicaid, are both on very unsound financial footing. Not only are both programs in jeopardy financially, but the magnitude of the problem is a real threat to the Federal budget.

Starting in 2008, the Medicare Program began spending more out of the hospital insurance trust fund than it is taking in. That deficit spending at the trust fund is the beginning of the end of Medicare unless Congress steps in and does something to maintain that trust fund. The Medicare trustees have been warning us for years that the hospital insurance trust fund—the trust fund, that is—is going to go broke. They now predict that year of going broke is 2017.

To keep going for four more years means finding a way to bridge the gap for the $75 trillion of unfunded liability, and this must be done in a manner that does not worsen the health care quality or access for beneficiaries.

Likewise, the Medicaid Program, which serves 59 million low-income pregnant women as well as children and the families, is on a very shaky financial ground.

We have the Government Accountability Office reporting to Congress that States—meaning the 50 States—are reaching a crisis with their part of the Medicaid Program. The Government Accountability Office predicts that State spending will grow faster than State revenues for at least the next 10 years. The impact of declining revenues is very clear. I quote what the GAO has said about this situation:

"Since most state and local governments are required to balance their operating budgets, the declining fiscal conditions shown in our simulations suggest, that without intervention, these governments would need to make substantial policy changes to avoid growing fiscal imbalances."

This, too, is the crisis facing the Medicaid Program today. So both of the two major Federal health care programs are in very serious trouble. It is no surprise that one of the most significant implications for our entire country and the 300 or more million people who live here. If reforms to health care are not done carefully—and I say "carefully" because I am not saying it should not be done—this is going to make the situation far worse, not better. Anyone listening would have no doubt of the ability of Congress to make it worse.

These dire economic implications are not the only thing at stake with health care reform. Besides the significant economic implications of health care reform, this is a bill that affects everyone in another very important way. It affects everyone's health by changing the way we get health care in this country. It touches the lives of every family, every senior, every child, every student. In plain language, it affects everybody: the 306 million people who live here now and the many more people who will be living here in the future.

It makes changes to health care that will be nearly impossible to undo. The reforms these bills contemplate will make long lasting changes to our health care system. These are changes that will have to live with for decades to come. Health reform presents this Chamber with a bill that has significant economic implications at a time when all eyes are focused on the economy, so focused on the economy that it almost reminds me of how President Clinton got elected on the campaign slogan, "It's the economy, stupid." This health care reform bill is a bill that will make permanent changes to our system of health care.

For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right. For all of these reasons, it makes it all the more important for us to get health care reform right.