

sect described in 1402(g) and who is an adherent of the teachings of that sect notwithstanding his or her employment status.

Mr. CASEY. I thank the chairman. So, for example, an Amish person working in a factory or store for a non-Amish employer and meeting the 1402(g) requirements would not be required to obtain insurance coverage against his or her religious convictions?

Mr. HARKIN. The Senator is correct. The managers' amendment creates a clear bright line exemption for individuals described in 1402(g). This religious conscience exemption applies whether one is unemployed, a self-employed Amish person, an Amish person working for an Amish employer, or an Amish person working for a non-Amish employer.

Mr. CASEY. I thank the Senator for that clarification.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

#### ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2009

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today it adjourn until 9:45 a.m., Wednesday, December 23; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and the Senate resume consideration of H.R. 3590, the health care reform legislation, with the time following any leader remarks and until 10 a.m. equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees; that at 10 a.m. and until 2 p.m. the time be controlled in alternating 1-hour blocks of time, with the majority controlling the first hour; further that the remaining time until 2:13 p.m. be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders, with the majority leader controlling the final half.

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

#### PROGRAM

Mr. REID. Madam President, Senators should expect a series of rollcall votes, maybe as many as five, to begin at approximately 2:13 tomorrow afternoon.

#### ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. REID. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it adjourn under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator DODD of Connecticut.

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

Mr. DODD. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DODD. 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. DODD. Madam President, I want to take a few minutes, if I may, this evening to speak about what this health care bill means to my constituents in Connecticut. I say to the Presiding Officer, the benefits to our States are very similar in many ways, but, obviously, we like to point out what this particularly means in our own respective jurisdictions that we represent.

But before doing so, I want to take a few minutes, if I could, because, again, tomorrow will be a short day, and then there are the votes, apparently, that we are going to have Thursday, and then we will be leaving the Senate for a number of weeks before we return in mid-January, and it might not be possible tomorrow or in the very early hours of Christmas Eve to say a special thanks to the people who work with our offices in this Chamber, both on the minority side and the majority side, who rarely get the kind of recognition they deserve.

I have tried periodically over the years to make sure that as to the consideration of every major bill we talk about the staff and what they have done. So I want to take a couple minutes and identify people with whom I have worked. This not an inclusive list. There are many more people who work for individual Senators who have done outstanding work. Our floor staff here, both on the majority side and the minority side, do a remarkable job and have great patience with all of us. I am very grateful to them, as well as for the jobs they perform.

I want to take a few minutes and recognize the people I have worked very closely with over the last—well, intensely—over the last almost year now on this issue.

Certainly in Senator REID's office, the majority leader's office, Kate Leone, Carolyn Gluck, Jacqueline Lampert and Randy Devalk deserve a great deal of credit. All of us know them and how much they have been involved in this issue.

And for those of us who serve in our caucus, we have listened to Kate Leone on numerous occasions go over the details of these bills, answer the questions Members have raised about the importance of the legislation. So to the members of Senator REID's staff—and, obviously, there are a lot more people in his office who deserve recognition—but I want to particularly recognize these four individuals with whom we have worked very closely.

Senator Kennedy, as we all know, was such a lion of this institution and cared so deeply about this issue. Over

the years, he attracted some wonderful people to work with him, as he fought year in and year out to bring us to the moment we are about to enjoy; and that is, to see some national health care legislation adopted for the very first time.

Michael Myers had worked on this issue for a number of years for Senator Kennedy, and still is here working with Senator HARKIN now as part of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

Mark Childress, again, worked for the majority leader, worked for Tom Daschle, has worked for others in this body, and has just done a fantastic job. He stayed on at my request and the request of Leader REID to help us work on this issue. He was involved with the White House as well, and really understood the substance of this bill as well as the political navigation that was necessary to bring us to this moment.

I thank Pam Smith as well for her fine work for Senator HARKIN. Jenelle Krishnamoorthy made a wonderful contribution. She worked closely with Senator HARKIN, and I want to thank her. Connie Garner was responsible, for many years, working on the CLASS Act, which is a part of our bill. Portia Wu and David Bowen did a remarkable job. John McDonough and Topher Spiro, as well, are individuals who certainly made a significant contribution to our product here.

Senator BAUCUS's staff: Liz Fowler, Bill Dauster, Russ Sullivan, Cathy Koch, Yvette Fontenot, David Schwartz, Neleen Eisinger, Chris Dawe, Shawn Bishop, and Kelly Whitener—I want to thank them for their efforts as well.

Again, we could give separate remarks about each of these individuals and their contributions.

In my office, again, like others, I have been blessed with some wonderful people. Jim Fenton is my legislative director and has done a terrific job. Tamar Magarik Haro, who is sitting with me on the floor this evening—I know we are not supposed to recognize people other than Members—along with Jeremy Sharp, they have just done a wonderful, wonderful job, and I know all of my colleagues have gotten to know both of them because of their work.

Monica Feit, Joe Caldwell, Bryan DeAngelis, Andy Barr, Lia Lopez, Daniel Barlava, and Rachael Holt all have made wonderful contributions as well.

Senate legislative counsel, with special thanks to Bill Baird, who was present throughout the entire HELP Committee consideration, has gone way above and beyond. And legislative counsel never gets the kind of recognition they deserve.

They do a tremendous job in drafting the actual legislation. Once these ideas are developed, then they require legislative language to be written.

From the administration, Nancy Ann DeParle, whom all of us have gotten to know very well; Jeanne Lambrew—I

want to give a special thanks to Jeanne. She has been just incredible in terms of her encyclopedic knowledge of the issues, working very closely with our staffs. Again, individuals who may not be well known to the public, but when this bill becomes law, these are the individuals who deserve special credit for their tremendous work.

Mike Hash, Lauren Aronson, Secretary Sebelius, Kathleen Sebelius, who left the governorship of Kansas to come here to be head of the Health and Human Services agency and has done a magnificent job in her new capacity; Jim Messina, who worked with MAX BAUCUS for years up here and has been the Deputy Chief of Staff at the White House and has done a tremendous job. Phil Schilliro and Shawn Maher both worked to represent the administration and their Legislative Affairs Office and they do a great job; Dana Singiser as well, for her work.

We will make this list available for the RECORD. I wanted to thank these individuals again for their fine work.

I wish to speak, if I can today, not in my capacity as a senior member of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee nor in my capacity as one of the coauthors of the underlying legislation, but rather in my capacity, as I said at the outset, as a Senator representing 3.5 million residents of the State of Connecticut. Our neighboring State, my good friend and colleague, the Senator from New Hampshire, the Presiding Officer, represents New England.

If you travel my State, you will meet some of the world's most talented and dedicated health care professionals. You will tour some of the Nation's finest hospitals where patients get world-class treatment. But you will also hear some heartbreaking stories from people in my State who come from middle-class families who have lost everything—their homes, their life's savings, their hope for the future—just because someone in their family got sick. They needed special care. You will meet hard-working men and women who have seen their insurance premiums skyrocket over the last decade from around \$6,000 for a family of four to over \$12,000 annually for that same family, and they wonder how much longer they will be able to continue to afford the coverage they have. You will meet small business owners facing an impossible choice between cutting off health care benefits to their employees or laying off those workers.

I have talked specifically about constituents of mine, small businesspeople who literally have been faced with that choice or who have had employees who dreaded having to leave the job they had because there were no health care benefits. They took reductions in pay because they just couldn't stay given the health conditions of their family. Having to leave a job they had for 20 years or more to find new work where there was health care coverage; leaving a job they loved for less pay because

they weren't able to get that health care coverage—not because their employer didn't want to give it to them but because that small employer just could not afford to do so and stay in business. Even those who are healthy in my State, who have insurance, there is that worry as well.

What I have described is not an irrational fear they have that someone in their family will lose their job that provides the coverage as I just described, worrying about that child who may develop an illness not covered by their policies, or worrying about no matter how much they pay in premiums their insurance doesn't allow them to be sure of anything at all.

The residents of my State understand the status quo is no longer sustainable because the so-called status quo threatens the basic economic security of every family in my State, as it does across this country. They and their fellow Americans in all 50 States sent us here to take action, and it is action that we shall take.

When this bill becomes law, the people of my State will begin to reap the benefits right away. One in four of my constituents have high blood pressure. One in four teens suffers from diabetes in Connecticut. Today, insurance companies can use these preexisting conditions, along with many others, as an excuse to deny these people coverage. Immediately, young people in our State and across the country will be protected against these preexisting conditions to receive the coverage they need. Beginning 90 days after this bill becomes law, every uninsured resident of my State who has been denied coverage because of a preexisting condition will be able to find the affordable coverage they need to treat that condition.

Small businesses make up more than three and four businesses in the State of Connecticut, but today only one-half of them are able to offer health benefits to their workers. Beginning in 2010, next year, some 37,000 small businesses in my State, as well as others across the nation, will be eligible for tax credits to make those benefits more affordable. A 50-percent tax break, \$40 billion in this bill, is provided specifically for that purpose: to assist the 37,000 small businesses in Connecticut, and others across the country, to get a tax credit, as much as 50 percent, to allow them to defer or reduce the cost of health insurance for their employees.

Small business owners throughout Connecticut have experienced persistent annual increases in premiums. In recent years—and this is true across the country, but certainly true in my State—it is not uncommon for small business owners to be told they have to pay 20 percent or more for the same insurance they had the previous year.

So the bill we are about to pass will empower the State insurance exchanges such as the one we will have in Connecticut in 2014 to deny insurers access to the exchange if they engage in

consumer price gouging in the next few years. That is going to be critically important. For the more than half million seniors in Connecticut, this bill protects Medicare, keeping it solid into the future. Nearly 100,000 seniors in my State hit what is called the doughnut hole in the prescription drug benefit area, costing them an average of more than \$4,000 annually.

This bill we are about to adopt takes the first critical step toward closing that doughnut hole, and Connecticut seniors should know that I and Chairman BAUCUS, along with majority leader HARRY REID, have committed to completing that job in conference, and we will do so.

Meanwhile, in Connecticut, seniors will see their Medicare premiums go down. They will see major improvements in the quality of care they receive, resulting in as many as 29,000 hospital readmissions being prevented. In my State of Connecticut, 3 in 10 Connecticut residents have not had a colorectal cancer screening.

One in six women over the age of 50 have not had a mammogram in the past 2 years. These are important screenings. They and other wellness programs will be provided at no cost to people in my State as well as others across the country. Beginning in 2011, seniors will be able to get a free annual checkup so they can stay well instead of simply receiving care when they get sick. That annual free checkup can make such a difference. I am a living example of that where—because under our health care plan, I can have a free medical checkup once a year. As a result of that, I discovered that I had prostate cancer, and what a difference that made to be able to discover that, to get through the surgery, and to know that I have a bright future ahead of me, not one that I would discover later on when the kind of surgery I received might have been worthless and pointless.

So these are the kinds of annual physicals Members of Congress get under our health care plans, and our fellow citizens ought to be able to as well, particularly our seniors.

In addition, there are some 255,000 Connecticut residents between the ages of 55 and 64 who will need home health services after they turn 65 because of an illness or an injury. These services, whether they involve installing a handicap shower or hiring a home health care aide, will help these older Americans live in their homes in dignity and with independence. But today these services are not always covered by Medicare or private insurance. Rather than having to impoverish themselves so they can qualify for Medicaid by transferring all of their wealth and assets to a family member or rely on the full-time help of loved ones, these seniors will be able to take advantage of a new voluntary program called the CLASS Act—authored by Senator Kennedy years ago and which is now a part of this bill—that will provide a cash

benefit to be used on these services and supports, totally paid for by the individual themselves. Not a nickel, not a penny of Federal money is in that program. It is totally based on the contribution that people make to that program.

So when I hear people talk about this as if it was some great robbery from the Federal Treasury, it doesn't involve the Federal Treasury at all. As the bill takes effect, the health insurance exchanges are set up and health insurance will become a buyer's market for people in my State as well. More than 350,000 Connecticut residents who today do not have insurance will finally have affordable options to choose from. Nearly a quarter of a million people in my State would be eligible for premium credits to help take care of the cost of insurance. That doesn't go into effect until 2014, but in 2010, next year, insurance companies will be prohibited from imposing lifetime caps on the amount of care you can receive.

Insurance companies will be prohibited next year from taking away your coverage, and they will be prohibited from discriminating based on gender or income in the year 2014. The insurance industry will be forced to spend more of your premium dollars on your health care, not on bureaucrats hired to come up with reasons to deny you the care you need. This is called the so-called medical loss ratios which require that resources be spent on patient care and needs of the policyholder rather than on profits or administrative costs.

The industry will also be required to offer an appeal if your claim is denied, and each State will set up its own independent appeals process to keep the industry honest. Next year the industry will be forced to provide more details about their policies so that you can shop for health insurance the same way you shop for anything else, armed with enough information to be a smart consumer.

All of these insurance items will take effect at least by 2014, many of them next year, as I have just mentioned.

It is not just consumers who will benefit. Connecticut's 15,000 physicians will also benefit. Today these physicians spend, on average, 140 hours and \$68,000 every year just dealing with bureaucrats at the health insurance companies. Let me repeat that: 140 hours and roughly \$68,000 every year just dealing with bureaucrats at the insurance companies. That is 2.1 million hours and \$1 billion in costs overall, time and money wasted in my State alone. That is going to end.

This bill cuts down on bureaucratic redtape and needless paperwork. Doctors will be able to spend their time caring for patients, not fighting with the insurance industry. Meanwhile, more than 5,000 Connecticut primary care physicians will qualify for the new 5- to 10-percent payment bonus. That happens next year in 2010. New programs will incentivize many more

young doctors to stay in primary care, which we all know is critically important.

Today, 9 percent of Connecticut residents can't access a primary care physician because there aren't enough doctors to go around. This bill makes an investment in our medical workforce and a \$10 billion investment in community health centers and the National Health Service Corps, which begins taking effect immediately in 2010. It will be phased in over 5 years. That is going to expand dramatically the availability of patient care with our community health care system.

As more uninsured people gain coverage, Connecticut will no longer have to subsidize the \$383 million it spends in uncompensated care our providers deliver each year—important at a time when my State is already, like every State—almost every State—in serious budget trouble.

I have just recited a long list of statistics showing how my State will benefit from this bill—in many instances, benefit immediately. Some will take a little longer, but many of these provisions go into effect in the next year. More important than any statistic will be what you will see when you tour my State, or any other State for that matter, after this bill takes effect—or more accurately, what you will not see. You will not see 100 people losing their insurance, their health insurance every single day, finding themselves cast into uncertainty and fear—100 people every day—that will no longer be the case. You will not see families paying an extra \$1,100 a year in health insurance premiums, the so-called hidden tax paid by everyone with insurance as a result of the nearly 50 million uninsured Americans. You will not see seniors facing the loss of their Medicare benefits because overpayments to private insurance companies have rendered the program insolvent. You will not see parents laying awake at night praying that their child's cough goes away because they can't afford to take him or her to see a doctor. You will not see people losing their homes, their life's savings, losing their economic security, all because they got sick or a child or a spouse did. You will not see people dying, as 45,000 do every year in our country, because they couldn't afford access to the health care system.

So as a senior member of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and a close and dear friend of our departed colleague, Senator Ted Kennedy, who led this fight for so long, it will be my honor—a deep honor indeed, one of the highest honors I would have had in the 30 years I have served here—to cast a vote in favor of this landmark legislation.

As one of two Senators whose job it is to look out for the people of my home State of Connecticut, supporting this bill is nothing short of my duty, and I intend to fulfill it with great pride at 8 a.m. on Christmas Eve. What better gift could I give to my folks at

home than to cast my vote as 1 of 100 in this body for health care reform in our Nation, so long overdue, so long waited for. And on this Christmas Eve it will become an accomplished feat of the U.S. Senate.

With that, I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of Colorado). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, there were a number of other people I wished to mention. I will not go through the list of all the staff involved in this effort in the Senate. I am sure I would miss some people. It is a lengthy list of those who played such an important role. I was fearful I wouldn't have a chance between now and the actual vote on Thursday morning, Christmas Eve, to express my deep gratitude as one Member who benefited tremendously from the participation of my staff, two of whom are seated with me this evening. I know that is probably a violation of Senate rules to recognize them, but I want my constituents at home and the American public to know how many dedicated people there are whose names they never know, faces they will never see.

I ask unanimous consent that a list of staff be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

REID

Kate Leone, Carolyn Gluck, and Randy DeValck.

HARKIN/KENNEDY

Michael Myers, Mark Childress, Pam Smith, Jenelle Krishnamoorthy, Connie Garner, Portia Wu, David Bowen, John McDonough, Topher Spiro, Stacey Sachs, Tom Kraus, Terri Roney, Craig Martinez, Taryn Morrissey, Andrea Harris, Sara Selgrade, Lee Perselay, Caya Lewis, Stephanie Hammonds, Andrew Garrett, Joe Hutter, Lauren McFerran, Jeff Teitz, Kate Cyrul, Dan Goldberg, Caroline Fichtenberg, Bill McConagha, Lory Yudin, and Evan Griffis.

BAUCUS

Liz Fowler, Bill Dauster, Russ Sullivan, Cathy Koch, Yvette Fontenot, David Schwartz, Neleen Eisinger, Chris Dawe, Shawn Bishop, Kelly Whitener, Tony Clapsis, Diedra Henry-Spires, Tom Reeder, Bridget Mallon, Tiffany Smith, and Catherine Dratz.

DODD

Jim Fenton, Tamar Magarik Haro, Jeremy Sharp, Monica Feit, Joe Caldwell, Bryan DeAngelis, Andy Barr, Lia Lopez, Daniel Barlava, and Rachael Holt.

Senate Legislative Counsel, with special thanks to Bill Baird, who, along with Stacy Kern-Scheerer, was present throughout the entire HELP Committee and has gone above and beyond.

OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

NancyAnn DeParle, Jeanne Lambrew, Mike Hash, Lauren Aronson, Secretary

Sebelius, Jim Messina, Phil Schilliro, Shawn Maher, and Dana Singiser.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, let me say this to the minority staff as well. While we have disagreed, and while they didn't vote for the bill, there are people I admire immensely on the minority staff. On our committee, there were wonderful suggestions and contributions that came from the Republican side of the aisle. While they didn't support the bill, I think they made it a better bill because of their contributions. I want to add their names as well. MIKE ENZI of Wyoming, the ranking member—and I worked with every Republican minority member of the HELP Committee—offered amendments that were included. While they may not want to admit it or acknowledge it, they made a contribution to this bill that makes it stronger and a better piece of legislation. I add their names as well for their efforts.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

#### TRIBUTE TO BARBARA A. SOULIOTIS

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I know all my colleagues share an indebtedness to the many staff members who work so (skillfully and) tirelessly behind the scenes each day. They assist us in serving the public and responding to the needs of our constituents. Today, I am honored to pay particular tribute to the contributions of one truly outstanding member of the Senate staff. She will retire at the end of this session of Congress after 47 years of impressive service to the citizens of Massachusetts.

Barbara Souliotis worked on Senator Edward M. Kennedy's first campaign for the Senate in 1962. She was the first employee in Senator Kennedy's office in November of that year. And from the moment he joined this body until the end of his life, Barbara served as a member of his staff and for the last 23 years, she was the State director of his Boston office.

"Barbs" recalls that on her first day at work here in Washington, she spilled a glass of Coca Cola on Senator Kennedy. When she started to apologize, he smiled his iconic smile and said "Barbara, you and I are going to get along just fine."

And they did. She served him brilliantly throughout his entire Senate career—the only member to run the full race as a "staffer", though many of us have reported back in whenever Barbara sent out the call.

Senator Kennedy considered "Barbs" to be his most indispensable assistant. If anyone ever had a question relating

to the Massachusetts people whom he loved, he would inevitably ask; "Have you checked with Barbs?" I know how proud Ted would be that this tribute honoring Barbara's extraordinary example of public service to our Senate, our Commonwealth and our country is taking place this day.

I first met Barbara Souliotis when I joined Senator Kennedy's staff in 1969—40 years ago. I could see right away that behind Barbara's modest demeanor was a remarkable woman who would never let Senator Kennedy down. Why?

Because she had learned that his values and his commitment to making a positive difference in peoples lives was the very reason she wanted to work for him in the first place. As I have thought about public service through the years, it has become clear that the best of our Nation was built on the labors of loyalty and love of unsung public heroines like Barbara Souliotis.

It was once said that "Loyalty means nothing unless it has at its heart—the absolute principle of self sacrifice". If that is the standard of loyalty, I can tell you this,—there is no more loyal United States Senate staffer than Senator Kennedy's own "Barbara Souliotis".

She embodies the admirable quality of loyalty no matter the circumstances. Barbs planned to retire years ago, but her loyalty to Senator Kennedy and her leadership position on his staff kept her with him to the end. Just as she had throughout his storied career, she worked unfailingly for Senator Kennedy through the difficult months of his illness and during his final days.

After Senator Kennedy passed away in August, Barbara continued her remarkable life's work of service as the director of my Boston office. This woman I had known as a colleague came, once again, to the aid of a friend. As one who was appointed to, among other things, continue constituent services for the people of Massachusetts, I knew I could keep that pledge—because Barbara Souliotis volunteered to stay on to lead the Kennedy team during these last few months.

Barb's loyalty, integrity and commitment are legendary. She is the true noble public servant, the tireless and compassionate friend, the unassuming aid to all around her.

If public service is Barb's vocation, sports is her avocation. There is no more avid fan of the Boston Red Sox, the Boston Bruins, the Boston Celtics, and the New England Patriots than Barbara Souliotis.

And she's also an outstanding golfer who plays without a handicap and who has at least one hole-in-one on her score card. In Massachusetts, sports and politics are our passion. And Barbs has scored literally thousands of holes-in-one for the constituents of Massachusetts. A lifelong resident of Haverhill, she has travelled tens of thousands of miles through the years serving the people of our Commonwealth.

In acknowledging Barbara's years of All-Star service to Senator Kennedy for 47 years and to me for these few important and historic months, I add my own personal heartfelt thanks to her, especially for the blessings of her friendship, support, and counsel over the many decades, and I wish her a well-deserved happy and healthy retirement in the many years to come. Thank you, Barbs. We love you. Hit 'em long and hit 'em straight!

#### NOMINATION OF ERROLL SOUTHERS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is only fitting that during this travel-heavy holiday season, we urge our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to work with us in confirming the nomination of Erroll Southers as Assistant Secretary for the Transportation Security Administration.

The Transportation Security Administration is tasked with ensuring the security and safety of travelers using our transportation network. Most often associated with security at airports, TSA responsibilities also include highway, rail, port, bus, and mass transit security. The agency grew out of the aftermath of 9/11, a somber reminder of the need for vigilant attention to transportation security.

Erroll Southers is the chief of homeland security and intelligence for the Los Angeles International Airport police force. He is ready for this job. He has nearly three decades working in public safety, homeland security, and intelligence. Chief Southers has worked as a Santa Monica police officer, special agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and as a top officer with the Los Angeles International Airport, assisting in the management of the largest U.S. airport police force.

Unfortunately, without Chief Southers in the position he has been nominated to, TSA is without the leadership necessary to move forward. The President nominated Chief Southers in September, and the nomination has been reported favorably to the Senate by both the Homeland Security and Commerce Committees, it is being held up by Senate Republicans.

At the same time Senate Republicans are insisting on expanding the role and responsibility of TSA by requiring guns to be allowed on Amtrak, they block and delay the permanent leadership necessary to implement these new policies.

And what is the justification for delaying Chief Southers' confirmation? It is not his qualifications, his past actions or experience. These are generally accepted to be outstanding. No, it is instead an unreasonable demand that he predetermine if TSA employees should be allowed to form unions. Instead of bending to political pressure, Chief Southers has taken the stance that this decision should be made with the input of all stakeholders, using