that I know of, on this bill in his time in the Senate. I would also like to thank my colleagues, Senator ENZI, the ranking member of the committee, former chairman and ranking member of the committee, for his help and also Senator BURR for working hard on the legislation and getting it where it is today.

Finally, I thank my friend, Senator DODD, for his tireless efforts. The Senate will certainly miss his leadership on this and so many other important issues. Additionally, I thank members of our staffs who helped to make this possible, and let me just—I am going to read their names, but let me say at the outset, while many of us were perhaps not around during Thanksgiving week or perhaps even the week after the elections, I can tell you the staffs were hard at work day after day, sometimes late in the evenings, sometimes on weekends, to help get this bill together. These staff people deserve so many thanks from not only me but from everyone involved with this legislation.

From Senator DURBIN's staff: Albert Sanders, Anne Wall, and Dena Morris; from Senator ENZI's staff: Chuck Clapton, Keith Flanagan, Travis Jordan, Frank Macchiarola, and Amy Muhlberg; Senator DODD's staff: Anna Staton and Tamar Haro; Senator GREGG's staff has worked on this bill from the beginning: Elizabeth Wroe; Senator BURR's staff: Anna Abram and Margaret Brooks; Senator REED's staff: Carolyn Gluck and Kasey Gillette; and from my staff: Kathleen Laird, Tom Kraus, Bill McConagha, Mark Halverson, Jenelle Krishnamoorthy, Pam Smith, and Dan Smith. All of them are heroes and heroines in my book. They really put forth supreme effort to get this bill to us today so we could have this overwhelming vote of approval.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR RUSS FEINGOLD

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I want to say a few words about a friend and colleague whom I will miss very much when he leaves the Senate after we adjourn, Senator RUSS FEINGOLD. I cannot thank him for his service without mentioning the outstanding work of his capable staff: Mary Irving, his chief of staff; Sumner Slichter, his policy director; Bob Schiff, chief counsel; and Paul Weinberger, his legislative director, a loyal and outstanding team.

Without intending it as a commentary on his successor, I have to confess I think the Senate will be a much poorer place without RUSS FEINGOLD in it. I know that in my next term I will experience fewer occasions of inspiration because of the departure of RUSS FEINGOLD, a man whose courage and dedication to the principles that guided his Senate service often inspired me.

I will also miss the daily experience of RUSS FEINGOLD's friendship, and the qualities that distinguish his friendship, his thoughtfulness, kindness, humor and loyalty. I have treasured that friendship all the years we have served together, and while friendship does not end with a Senate career, I will sorely miss his presence. I will miss seeing him every day. I will miss traveling with him. I will miss the daily reminder of what a blessing it is to have a true friend in Washington.

Our first encounter with one another was in a Senate debate in which we argued about an aircraft carrier, somewhat heatedly, if memory serves. RUSS thought the U.S. Navy had one too many. I thought we did not have enough. It was, I am sorry to admit, not a very considerate welcome on my part to a new colleague, whom I would soon have many reasons to admire. But to RUSS's credit, he did not let my discourtesy stand in the way of working together on issues where we were in agreement. And to my good fortune, he did not let it stand in the way of our friendship either.

We are of different parties and our political views are often opposed.

We have had many debates on many issues. But where we agreed on wasteful spending, ethics reform, campaign finance reform and other issues, it was a privilege to fight alongside and not against RUSS FEINGOLD.

We do not often hear anymore about Members of Congress who distinguish themselves by having the courage of their convictions; who risk their personal interests for what they believe is in the public interest. I have seen many examples of it here, but the cynicism of our times, among the political class and the media and the voters, tends to miss examples of political courage or dismiss them as probable frauds or, at best, exceptions that prove the rule. In his time in the Senate, RUSS FEINGOLD, every day and in every way, had the courage of his convictions. And though I am quite a few years older than RUSS, and have served in this body longer than he has, I confess I have always felt he was my superior in that cardinal virtue.

We were both up for re-election in 1998. I had an easy race. RUSS had a difficult one. As many of our colleagues will remember, RUSS and I opposed soft money, the unlimited corporate and labor donations to political parties that we believed were compromising the integrity of Congress, and we were a nuisance on the subject. RUSS 's opponent in 1998 was outspending him on television, and the race became tighter. It reached a point where most observers, Democrats and Republicans, expected him to lose. The Democratic Party pleaded with RUSS to let it spend soft money on his behalf. RUSS refused. He risked his seat, the job he loved, because his convictions were more important to him than any personal success. I think he is one of the most admirable people I have ever met in my life.

We have had a lot experiences together. We fought together for many things, important things. And we have fought many times on opposite sides. We have been honored together and scorned together. We have traveled abroad together. We could not be farther apart in our views on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but we traveled there together as well, to gain knowledge that would inform our views and challenge them. We have listened to each other; debated each other; defended each other; joked and commiserated together.

And in my every experience with RUSS FEINGOLD, in agreement and disagreement, in pleasant times and difficult ones, in heated arguments and in the relaxed conversation of friends, he was an exemplary public servant; a gentleman; good company; an irreplaceable friend; a kind man; a man to be admired.

I can not do justice in these remarks to all of RUSS's many qualities or express completely how much I think this institution benefited from his service here and how much I benefited from knowing him. I lack the eloquence. I do not think he is replaceable. We would all do well to keep his example in our minds as we serve our constituents and country and convictions. We could not have a better role model.

I have every expectation we will remain good friends long after we have both ended our Senate careers. But I will miss him every day. And I will try harder to become half the public servant he is. Because his friendship is an honor and honors come with responsibilities.

God bless my friend RUSS FEINGOLD.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I want to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I spent a lot of time, as my colleagues have, traveling our States during the elections, to be sure, but also since. I hear a lot of discussion from regular people—not from people running for office per se but regular people—about what this new health care law has meant to them. I meet 22-year-olds who are now on their parents' health insurance plan. If you are 22 in this country today, your chances of finding a job with decent health care are not real high in most places in our country, and

they now celebrate the fact that they can be on their parents' health insurance automatically. That is a big victory for consumers and a big victory for those families.

I also talk to people who have children who have preexisting conditions and could not get insurance as a result. The law now is, an insurance company cannot deny insurance to a family with a child with preexisting conditions. We also know now that someone who is sick and their health care is very expensive, that they cannot be thrown off their insurance because it costs the insurance company too much money.

We know now, and I hear from small businesses who almost all want to insure their employees but simply cannot because of the high costs, they now are getting a 30-percent tax credit to be able to insure their employees, something, as I said, they wanted to do whether they live in Conneaut in northeast Ohio or Middletown and Hamilton in southwest Ohio. I see that all over my State—in Bowling Green, in Toledo, in Zanesville and Chillacothe and Columbus and Bellaire. We are also seeing that so many senior citizens are getting hit hard by high drug prices.

We have begun. As one of the leaders in that effort on the HELP Committee, Senator BENNET, the Presiding Officer, knows that we have been helpful in now beginning to close that doughnut hole that seniors fall into. After they have had $2,000 of drug costs, they are still paying the premium every month, but they do not get any coverage until their costs go above $5,000. That is sort of a cruel bargain that this Congress, for reasons I did not exactly understand—I opposed it back then—passed the drug benefit and inflicted that on seniors. We are beginning to fix that.

We know all that. Those are citizens I talk to about that. Put that aside for a minute, unfortunately, and look at so many elected officials in a State, conservative elected officials, mostly Republicans, who are saying we should repeal the health care law and we should bring back preexisting condition, take 23-year-olds, home from college or home from the service or whatever, and if they do not have TRICARE, throw them off their parents' health care plan, take away the tax cuts to small businesses. That is what they want to do and repeal this health care plan.

My only question is, I guess I am waiting for the first Republican elected official—whether he is an attorney general in Ohio or elsewhere or whether he is a Congressman or she is a Congressman or a Senator—I am waiting for the first one who says: I want to repeal this plan. Take away these consumer protections; I want to repeal this plan and take away health insurance for people who are in high risk pools who are getting insurance now and people down the road who are going to get covered with health insurance, the 50 million Americans who do not have it and the tens of millions of Americans who are underinsured. I want to hear one of those elected officials, who is saying repeal the health care plan, say they are not going to take their government health insurance. I cannot believe the number of elected officials, mostly Republicans, who have been the beneficiaries of government-sponsored health insurance—taxpayer-financed health insurance for 10 years, 20 years, 30 years—who are saying: No, I want to repeal health insurance for millions of Americans who are about to receive it. Some of them are already getting it; all of them getting better consumer protections.

They will keep their plan, paid for by taxpayers. They want to deny it to others. I am waiting for one of my colleagues—and Republicans around the State and around the country who are calling for this health care law to be repealed—to step up and say: Oh, I am not going to take government insurance either. I am still waiting for that day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

HOME BUYER TAX CREDIT

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, if we want to revive our economy, one thing we can do is to bring back and extend the home buyer tax credit we enacted earlier this year. It was for a limited time. It has expired, but it was hugely successful.

It is an $8,000 tax credit for qualified first-time home buyers and a $6,500 tax credit for repeat, move-up home buyers. And this tax credit that we passed that was law was largely responsible for many of the homes that were purchased in States like mine, Florida, where the housing market has gone kaput. The mortgages were inflated when the housing bubble burst, the property values dropped and you see a number of our States that have been hit so hard, albeit, the entire Nation has been hit hard by the housing bubble bursting.

Well, we tried this home buyer tax credit, and it worked. It was popular in other States, like California, like in Texas. Texas had a more stable housing market, but folks recognized that a good housing market provides a lot of ancillary benefits for the economy. It creates jobs. It generates consumer spending. The studies have shown, looking back on this tax credit we gave for housing, it was in the first quarter of this year, it led to a 6-percent increase in all home sales, and it led to a whopping 42-percent increase in the sale of new homes.

Now by contrast, when that credit expired, the home sales plummeted. Well, what does it mean in real terms to real people and real families? It means jobs. It means jobs selling houses, jobs constructing houses, jobs financing houses—anything associated with a person having one of their most important assets, their home. And then it means a lot of jobs about making all the things that go inside a house. And that's the kind of boost we need again.

We need again to get this economy moving. Now, since it has been shown to work because it generates home sales and purchases—in States where the real estate industry is a large part of the economy, in States where housing values have dropped, where many homes are underwater in the value of their fair market value now compared to the face amount of their mortgage in many communities that are distressed by foreclosures—and what community has not been hit by that?—what it does is it turns that around and boosts the home sales. That is a part of economic recovery. Now, there are those who are out there who are going to say: Well, it is too expensive. That it doesn't yield good results in certain parts of the country that were not hit with the housing crisis like the rest of us were. And some people will claim: Well, we're coming out of the recession—by their estimation—and it would be better to target our efforts elsewhere.

Mr. President, the recession's not over for many, many Americans. And if something has proven it works, why don't we reinstitute it? It was President Franklin Roosevelt who said, during another time of economic peril, the Great Depression, he said:

> Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.

Mr. President, do we not have the ''dark realities of the moment'' of what's happening in the State of the Presiding Officer right now, in my State, and many others? Indeed, these are dark economic times, and most every American knows it. Just look to the elections. In almost every exit poll after the election, 60 percent of the voters said the economy was the most important issue facing the Nation—that they were concerned about as they walked into that polling place. Forty percent of those same voters said their families are worse off financially than they were just a few years ago. And 33 percent of them said that someone in their household had lost a job recently. Is that not the ''dark realities of the moment''?

So let's take something that worked. And despite the fact that it's costly, let's find an offset. Let's find another source of revenue to pay for approximately the $15 to $20 billion that the home buyer tax credit cost before that boosted the sales of homes and started to revive the housing industry and, therefore, revive the fair market values of people's homes. Let's move to quickly bring back this home buyer tax credit. It's worked before, and it will work again.

Mr. President, if I may be recognized again, since no one is waiting to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.