

SNOWE and I have said we are going to set aside some of the partisan bickering that has surrounded health care in this session of the Senate in years past; we are going to move forward and try to make sure seniors get some help.

I hope families and seniors who are listening tonight will look at this poster. We are urging that seniors send copies of their prescription drug bills directly to each of us in the Senate here in Washington, DC, and help us in the Senate to come together and deal with the issue that is of such extraordinary importance to our families.

There are a variety of ways this issue could be addressed. I think personally the Snowe-Wyden legislation, because it is bipartisan and because more than half of the Senate has voted for a plan to fund it, is the way to go. But I am sure there are other kinds of ideas.

When seniors send in copies of their prescription drug bills as we try to get action on this issue, I hope they will also let us know their ideas about legislative approaches, be it support for Senator SNOWE, the Snowe-Wyden legislation, or other kinds of approaches. But what to me is unacceptable is just ducking. I do not think there is any excuse for inertia on this issue. I think it is time for the Senate to say we cannot afford, as a nation, to see seniors suffer the way they do when they cannot get prescription drug coverage.

Just as important as the questions of fairness for seniors, it seems to me, are the questions of economics. From an economic standpoint, the need to cover some of these prescription drugs for seniors looks to me like a pretty easy call. With a modest investment, we can save a whole lot of expense that comes about when they suffer strokes and

heart attacks and the like when they cannot get their medicine.

So I hope in the days ahead, Members of the Senate, in senior centers and medical facilities and other places where we all go to visit, will take the time to talk to some of the folks at home about the need for prescription drug coverage and discuss ways we can actually get this benefit added in this session of the Senate. Too many of our seniors now cannot afford their medicine. That is what these bills are all about. What these bills and these letters I am getting from seniors at home in Oregon are all about is that they cannot afford their medicine. These are the people who are told by their doctors to take three prescriptions; they cannot afford to do that and they end up taking two prescriptions. Then they cannot afford to do that; then it is one. Pretty soon, sure as the night follows day, they get sicker and they need institutional care. That is, obviously, bad for their health and it is also bad for the Nation's fiscal health. So I intend to keep coming back to the floor of the Senate.

Since my days with the Gray Panthers at home in Oregon, I felt this was an important benefit for the Nation's older people. All these letters I am receiving as a result of folks sending in copies of their prescription drug bills, if anything, just reaffirms to me how important it is that the Senate act on this issue, and do it in a bipartisan way.

Let's show seniors, let's show the skeptics we can come together around this important priority. This is not a trifling matter. This is, for many, many seniors, their big out-of-pocket expense. Many of them do not have pri-

vate health insurance that covers it. Many of them are simply falling between the cracks in terms of meeting their health care expenses. For many elderly people, as a result of escalating health costs, they are paying more proportionally out of their own pocket today than they were back when Medicare began in 1965. That should not be acceptable to any Member of the Senate.

I intend to come back to the floor again and again and again until this Senate, on a bipartisan basis, looks to addressing this prescription drug coverage. The Snowe-Wyden legislation is bipartisan. It uses marketplace forces. We reject the kind of price control regimes others may wish to pursue. I am hopeful we can get action on this issue because, for the millions of seniors who cannot afford their prescriptions, the Senate's willingness to tackle this issue, and do it on a bipartisan basis and get some relief for the seniors, will help instill a sense of confidence, a sense that the Senate is listening to them, hearing them, and is willing to respond to their most significant needs.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M.
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate, under the previous order, will stand adjourned until 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, November 3, 1999.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:49 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, November 3, 1999, at 9:30 a.m.