

rule has been published. That is not new. It is not unusual. It is a step that is taken in times of emergency, and I argue the current economic situation dictates we are in such an emergency.

Let us also be candid. There are several competing proposals to provide temporary health care coverage, and they all raise the same issues. Whether we are talking about direct payments, COBRA, tax credits, as some propose, or block grants to States, as the President has suggested, we have to come up with a system that works quickly and works efficiently.

I say let us work on solving these implementation issues together rather than trying to undermine each other or pointing fingers and saying it cannot be done.

Let me conclude by reiterating how important health care coverage is to Americans and how devastating it can be for a family to lose its coverage. I believe the package of health proposals I have put together will go a long way toward helping those who are truly in need. It will also provide a quick, temporary boost to the economy.

I realize not everyone agrees with our approach, but I do hope we all can agree health insurance coverage is a crucial element of any economic stimulus package. It is the right thing to do, and it is good policy.

I look forward to working with all my colleagues to reach an agreement that keeps our primary goals in mind; that is, stimulating the economy and helping American families.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent there be a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak for a period not to exceed 10 minutes.

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

VA-HUD APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Madam President, I was proud to support the entire VA-HUD Appropriations conference report yesterday, including its vital investments for our Nation's veterans. Chairperson MIKULSKI and Ranking Member BOND work hard each and every year to provide investment in a wide range of important agencies and programs, ranging from veterans, to housing, to the National Science Foundation.

This year I am particularly proud of a new investment within the National

Science Foundation, NSF, to promote math and science education. Two new programs have been funded: the Mathematics and Science Partnerships program and the Noyce Scholarships worth \$165 million.

Our elementary and secondary students are currently sadly lacking in their mastery of technical subjects. Although our 4th graders are on a par with the rest of the world, by the time they reach the 12th grade they are in the bottom half of countries of the world. This is an intolerable situation. Our United States students come to college ill equipped to study mathematics, science, and engineering. The partnerships and scholarships funded in this package offer the promise of substantial improvement in the performance of our students.

Under the Mathematics and Science Partnerships programs, universities, businesses, and local educational institutions will form partnerships to develop new programs to teach these subjects. These programs will be watched and evaluated and those that are successful will be incorporated into the mainstream of K-12 education.

The Noyce Scholarships will address a different problem. One of the best predictors of student performance is the quality of the teacher. Too many of our teachers of technical subjects are not well qualified. The scholarships will remedy this situation by supporting students of technical subjects who agree to teach two years for every year of support. This will ensure that many of our urban and rural schools that are particularly in need of good teachers will obtain relief.

President Bush proposed the math and science partnerships in his budget. Working with Senators KENNEDY and ROBERTS, I sponsored legislation in the Senate to authorize the Partnerships and the Noyce Scholarships. The House of Representatives has already passed a similar measure introduced by Congressman BOEHLERT. The VA-HUD appropriations package provide the first year of funding and the down payment to start these key programs to improve math and science education, and invest in our future.

I appreciate the support of my colleagues for the entire package, and I am especially pleased about these new investments in math and science education which represent such promise for the future.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2001

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Madam President, I rise today to speak about hate crimes legislation I introduced with Senator KENNEDY in March of this year. The Local Law Enforcement Act of 2001 would add new categories to current hate crimes legislation sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred July 18, 1999 in West Hollywood, CA. Three men attacked two transgendered women with aluminum baseball bats. The assailants yelled anti-gay epithets during the attack. One of the victims required hospitalization for a head injury.

I believe that government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2001 is now a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation, we can change hearts and minds as well.

CARGO LIABILITY REFORM

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Madam President, today I take notice of a recent positive development in the creation of a more modern legal regime for international shipping. I was very pleased to see that America's importers and exporters and the ocean carriers that transport America's international trade reached agreement last month on the form and substance of international cargo liability reform.

While this is a field with which most of us are at best only vaguely familiar, it has been the subject of intense debate in maritime circles for many years. In fact, draft reform legislation proposed by the Maritime Law Association of the United States was the subject of a hearing in the Senate Commerce Committee in 1998. Similar draft legislation was also reviewed by the Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine during the last Congress under the leadership of Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON. Because of the inability of the commercial parties to agree on how or whether to proceed with such a proposal, however, the legislation was never introduced.

Last month, the World Shipping Council, representing the ocean shipping companies serving America's foreign trades, and the National Industrial Transportation League, representing American importers and exporters, announced that they had reached agreement on cargo liability reform. They issued a joint statement outlining their agreement and pledged to work through the process to be established by the U.N. Commission on International Trade Law, (UNCITRAL), to assist in the development and ratification of a new international cargo liability convention. The goal of this effort is to produce an internationally acceptable instrument that can be ratified by the United States and our trading partners.

Most parties are in agreement that the U.S. law governing cargo liability, which dates back to 1936, can benefit from being updated, ideally in the context of a uniform international legal regime. What they have not been able