

afford the cost of getting food to the marketplace and for us to buy it without raising the price of these products. Everything is going up because of the price of oil.

And we find that we can be energy independent in this country. We can move rapidly toward energy independence if we drill off the continental shelf and Alaska, and drill for natural gas and convert coal shale into oil. We can be energy independent, and we don't have to depend on the rest of the world.

And the American people, Mr. Speaker, need to contact their Congressmen and their Senators and tell them that we need to move toward energy independence. We need to drill here in America. We can get the job done. We're a can-do country. And we need to get with it right away.

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#### IT IS TIME TO BAIL OUT MAIN STREET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, we've bailed out Wall Street once already this year. We may be doing it again soon. But it's time to bail out Main Street by doing what we should have done 50 years ago, and that is provide Americans with universal health care. It's the fastest and most effective way Congress can shore up the American family. Because we all know that Americans are either paying too much for health care, can't afford to buy enough coverage, or can't afford any coverage at all. And the cost in dollars and in human terms is staggering.

A generation ago, the head of General Motors famously said, "as GM goes, so goes the Nation." It's no secret that GM and America are struggling with an economic crisis. We can make the difference by addressing the single largest expense facing an American family and American business today, health care. Every day in America, the American people are forced to dig deeper and deeper into their own pockets to pay for health care. And every day American business is forced to transfer more of the burden to employees or drop coverage altogether.

America's health care system today looks like an ambulance riding on one wheel. And even that wheel will soon fall off if we continue to support a failed system that is not made in America, not worthy of America and nothing more than an accident of history.

In the early 20th century, there was a movement to provide universal health care. But ironically it was fiercely opposed by the insurance industry at a time when it made most of its money selling death benefits to those who feared a pauper's grave. Emerging from

the Great Depression in 1930, Franklin Delano Roosevelt wanted to institute universal health care. But his advisers feared the American Medical Association would kill FDR's proposal for Social Security in their opposition to health care.

In the 1950s, the legendary labor leader, Walter Reuther, first won a health care benefit and a pension too for automobile workers in a labor agreement with General Motors. Then Reuther tried to enlist GM and others to join forces and lobby the Federal Government to institute universal health care. But business couldn't see coming the economic storm from global competition and didn't trust government. Organized labor, flush from a victory in Detroit, saw health care as a perpetual win at the bargaining table, and organized medicine was relentless at lobbying until they drove the universal health care program into the ditch again.

In the second half of the 20th century, there were other attempts by the American leaders, but all of them were killed by seemingly unlimited lobbying resources. Today we have 50 million Americans with no health care coverage at all, another 25 million Americans without adequate protection, and every American can't find pants with pockets deep enough to keep paying costs that are already out of sight.

The only universal truth about health care in America today is that every single American knows someone with a health care crisis or is facing one themselves. American business has to compete today in a global economy, but American business has a major health care benefit expense on its books that the international competitors do not have. Even great companies in my congressional district, which are national models to providing employee benefits like health care, are being stretched to the limit, and their balance sheets, like a rubber band, can only flex so much before they break.

We cannot stand idly by and watch when we know that developing and instituting an American single payer health care system can dramatically improve the health of American business and American families literally and financially. And for the first time in decades, we have a chance if we're willing to seize the opportunity. There are cracks in the dams of opposition. A new survey of U.S. doctors published recently in the *Annals of Health Research* finds that 59 percent of American doctors now support single payer health care plans, which is a dramatic double-digit increase in support in the last 7 years.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors passed a resolution a few weeks ago. Organized labor recognizes a changing global economy that means they can best represent workers not at one bargaining table, but on a national level where everyone benefits equally.

Even business is beginning to rethink its trust of government. In 2002, Detroit's auto subsidiaries in Canada strongly supported continuation of a single payer health care program because of its positive economic impact on them and their workers.

A few years ago, I asked businesses' executives if they would be willing to pay 6 percent of their revenue to off-load health care and no one raised their hand. Now the average cost is 13 percent for business, and a business leader recently asked me if that deal was still on the table. I'm here to say single payer is on the table. It's time to breach the dam of opposition and create a single payer health care system for the health and well-being of the American people and American business.

We have tried the alternatives. The free enterprise system has had 50 years. But they can't do it. They have failed again and again, and the costs go up all the time. It's time to do what works in every industrialized country in the world.

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#### HONORING SENATOR JESSE HELMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, this evening, I rise with a heavy heart to honor the life of former Senator Jesse Alexander Helms, Jr., of North Carolina. Senator Helms served from 1972 to 2002, 30 years in the United States Senate, tying the longest-serving Senator from North Carolina in that record.

Senator Helms was known to most Americans as a rock-rib conservative, both committed to a smaller, more efficient government that taxes less and spends less, and also a social conservative who would stand up to the common society of the day that was allowing for many permissive activities.

Senator Helms was much more than that, though. He was an ardent anti-communist, and supported freedom around the world against the tyranny of communism. Senator Helms has a very distinguished record in the United States Senate spanning three decades.

He was known as the strongest conservative in the United States Senate in his time, one of the best known American conservatives of his time. But what many people don't realize is that in 1976, just 4 years into his first term in the United States Senate, Senator Helms did a very bold thing, he endorsed Governor Ronald Reagan in his primary for President against Gerald Ford. Senator Helms was the only Senator to endorse Reagan in 1976.

Although then-Governor Reagan had not won any primaries coming into the