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NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, January 31, 1994

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SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER BOB DOLE REMARKS TO AMERICAN HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

Good morning. Its great to have a chance to talk with you about an issue that will consume much of our attention for the coming months, health care reform.

But before I talk with you about our view of the debate to come, let me make it clear that I believe our discussions over health care reform must move beyond terminology and theatrics. This debate should not be caught up in a fight over whether there is or is not a crisis.

The liberals in the media would have you believe that the only serious legislation before us is the Administration's bill. They can't imagine that moderates or conservatives of either party could be serious about this issue. Some of these commentators are the same folks who explain that greed and the profit motive are what drive our health care providers. We both know they are wrong.

Status Quo Not Acceptable

Republicans have not and will not argue that the status quo is acceptable. It is not.

Republicans have not and will not argue that real problems aren't faced by families in this country each day. They are.

The biggest problem, is a fear that when you need it the most, your health insurance won't be there.

It is a fear that if you are sick, the services won't be there. And it should be a real fear that when you need it, the quality of care now available, won't be there.

This debate is not about whether we should put reforms in place -- it is a debate about how much.

As evidenced by the panel discussion just completed, not a single one of my Republican colleagues opposes real, measurable reform. In fact, every single Republican proposal resolves the problems cited so dramatically by the President last week.

Move Beyond Rhetoric to Reality

For example, we heard about Richard and Judy Anderson who lost their coverage when he lost his job. Every bill before us solves that problem. In fact, we could have solved that problem three years ago if the Democrat leadership had permitted us to pass, then Senator, now Secretary Bentsen's bill.

And what about those 81 million Americans with pre-existing conditions the President cited. Their problems are solved by each Republican bill -- and were part of the old Bentsen bill as well. And finally, lets talk about those Americans who have no coverage today. The Chafee/Dole bill and the Nickles/Dole bill both provide for universal coverage and subsidize the low income so they can purchase their coverage.

It is time to move beyond rhetoric to reality.

The Administration is attempting to sell price controls, global budgets and government monopolies as the answers to these very real problems. They call us naysayers because we oppose turning over one seventh of our economy to the government.

Don't Destroy World's Finest Health Care System

What my colleagues and I refuse to accept is a destruction of the finest health care system in the world under the guise of efforts to make care available to all.

Its not the goal we disagree with, it is the elements that make up the prescription for change.

Like many Americans, I am here today in large part because of the remarkable hospitals, physicians, nurses, and other providers this nation has produced. I, like many others, have

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benefitted from the enormous investments in research and development made by the health care manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies in this country.

We cannot put such innovation at risk.

I have been told as recently as last week by two of the largest health care companies in this country that the threats of price controls and the suggestion that the Secretary of H.H.S. Can control the entry of new drugs and technologies will be the death knell for research as we know it. And I believe them.

A recent article in the National Review chronicled some of the more dramatic advances of recent years. Smallpox has been eradicated, cases of polio and whopping cough are virtually unknown. Life expectancy has increased from 54 in 1920 to more than 75 years today.

The President of Johnson and Johnson told me that 35 percent of their sales today are for products that were not even on the market as little as five years ago. We can with good reason claim to have the finest system in the world. As I have said before, people come here from England, from Germany, from Canada. There is a reason -- its you, and the rest of the American health care system.

But make no mistake about it, we are not perfect. Each of your hospitals sees patients everyday who are far sicker than they should be because they delayed needed care and now use your emergency room as a primary care provider. Your indigent care loads have increased and are crippling many of you. But, in your desire to achieve universal access and coverage you cannot accept reform that will cripple our system and compromise quality. If you accept price controls, mandates, and monopolies you will lose your ability to do what you do best.

At the moment, the Administration seems to be more interested in finding villains than solutions. It's time to put finger pointing aside -- and focus on real solutions to real problems. It's time to move out of the "war room" and on to Main Street. This issue is not about who wins or loses the political game, it's about the care we provide to every man, woman and child in this country.

Basis For Compromise

Notwithstanding all the rhetoric of late, including threats of a veto, I still believe Republicans and Democrats can come to an agreement on a bill this year. It won't look like any one bill out there now -- but it will hopefully have the strongest elements of all.

I continue to believe the basis for compromise exists. There is, in fact, a great deal in common among all our proposals both Democrat and Republican. And the reforms we can agree on are not insignificant. They may not turn the system upside down as envisioned by some at the White House but they will make a difference.

I have focused much of my speech on our areas of disagreement. Let me review briefly those areas where I believe we can reach agreement and hopefully provide a base upon which a compromise can be built.

While all Republicans say no to new employer mandates, to price controls and mandatory alliances, many say yes to the following efforts to control costs:

1. Individual responsibility through an individual mandate. Like the Administration, the Chafee and Nickles proposals require all individuals to obtain coverage. Frankly, if we are ever to reform our system, individuals must become aware of the economic implications of their own behavior and decisions. This is true with regard to the kind of insurance they buy as well as their own life style decisions. For example, do they smoke, or drink or eat too much.
2. Simplified uniform claims form
3. Electronic billing -- with protections for privacy.
4. Greater emphasis on preventive care. We know it costs a lot less to prevent a low birth weight baby than it does to care for one.
5. Stepped up anti-fraud enforcement

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Congressional Oversight Without Restricting President

This amendment seeks to introduce Congressional oversight into the peacekeeping decision-making process and place some reasonable limits on U.S. participation in U.N. peacekeeping -- without restricting the President's ability to act as Commander-in-Chief.

The United Nations Participation Act, passed in 1945, has only been amended twice -- the last time nearly thirty years ago in 1965. My amendment simply brings the United Nations Participation Act into the modern world.

While the cosponsors of this legislation to date have all been Republican, I do not view the U.S. role in United Nations peacekeeping as a Republican-Democrat issue. This is a matter between the Congress and the Executive -- it is not about partisan politics, but about responsible Congressional oversight.

This amendment will put Congress back in the loop. The legislation is the product of many hours of discussions and incorporates many ideas from my colleagues, especially Senator Pressler and Senator Domenici.

I have made two changes in offering this amendment. First, I have changed the withholding percentage of U.S. peacekeeping assessments until the appointment of an independent inspector general from 50% to 20%, to reflect the overwhelming bipartisan support for the Pressler-Byrd amendment -- which passed 93-6 last week.

Second, I have decided to refrain, for the time being, from offering the provision on foreign command. While I do not think American servicemen and women should be asked to risk their lives for the U.N. flag, I do not want debate on the Peace Powers Act to be sidetracked by the Constitutional issues raised by limiting foreign command. However, I may offer the foreign command amendment before the end of consideration of this bill.

Amendment Balances Wide Range of Views

This legislation attempts a balance between a wide range of views. Some senators wanted to go much further in various provisions while others may think certain elements go too far.

Section 804 requires notification to Congress before U.N. Security Council votes on peacekeeping. It does not, contrary to some media reports, require Congressional authorization before such votes. That is the view, for example, of my colleague from Nebraska, Senator Kerrey, who wrote last October: "Every decision to participate in a U.N. peacekeeping operation should be subject to Congressional approval." Instead of requiring authorization, the Peace Powers Act requires advance notification -- and contains an exception for emergency situations. This provision -- as well as many others in the amendment -- should be welcomed by the Administration as a way to facilitate consultation and share responsibility with the Congress. As the experience in Somalia taught us, with Congress in on the takeoff, the landings will be much easier -- even if there's a crash landing.

There may be those who argue that this amendment amounts to massive new legislation that should be subject to hearings before it is voted on. I would point out, however, that much of this legislation has received broad bipartisan support in previous Congressional action. Eight sections of this amendment are already in the underlying legislation in some form or included in the Fiscal Year 1994 Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations act.

There are new provisions in this bill -- on ensuring the safety of Americans captured in U.N. peacekeeping operations, on providing

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notice of U.N. bills submitted to the United States, on transmitting U.N. resolutions to the Congress -- but these are not controversial issues that require long hearings.

Don't Raid Defense Budget for U.N. Operations

With respect to U.S. funding, section 811 of my amendment will end the raiding of the Department of Defense budget for U.N. peacekeeping by requiring that DOD funds for peacekeeping be authorized by Congress. If the administration wants to ask for Defense Department money and Congress authorizes and appropriates the funds, that's fine. But it is high time to end back door assaults on a defense budget that is already stretched too thin.

Some may argue that the administration is ready to publicly discuss its review of peacekeeping -- Presidential Decision Directive 13. Word of PDD-13 first leaked out last summer, about the time of Committee action on the State Department bill. While there have been some informal briefings on U.N. peacekeeping, we have not been provided details about the Administration's new policy. It is my understanding that the document is still classified and unavailable to Congress. The administration did, however, decide to talk to the news media about their plans.

Despite specific requests, administration officials did not want to come up and talk about the provisions of my amendment -- maybe their minds are already made up. According to a New York Times story over the weekend, and I quote, "suggestions from lawmakers may be incorporated, but administration officials said they did not expect to make major changes." Maybe this amendment is consistent with their plan -- I guess I'd have to ask the New York Times.

Last fall, the distinguished Majority Leader has asked the Foreign Relations, Armed Services and Intelligence committees to review the war powers issue. Some of my colleagues may argue that action on my amendment should await that process. I stand ready to talk about war powers -- Presidential decisions to use force in defense of American interests -- but today I stand ready to take action on peace powers.

Updating U.N. Participation Act

This amendment updates the United Nations Participation Act. During Senate debate in 1945, Senator Robert Taft offered an amendment which would have required Congressional direction before the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. voted on peacekeeping issues. That amendment was defeated -- 41-18 -- in large part by the argument that close consultation with Congress would occur before such votes.

Recent events have demonstrated that such consultation has not occurred, despite the proliferation of U.N. peacekeeping operations. Enactment of this legislation will help avoid a repetition of what happened in Somalia -- where missions were changed with little public awareness, operations conceived with little public understanding, and costs accrued with little public consensus.

In my view, this amendment strikes the balance between Congressional oversight and Presidential power. This legislation should also help restore the American peoples' faith in the U.S. relationship with the United Nations.

Therefore, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation as a means to strengthen cooperation and consultation between Congress and the Executive, and between the United Nations and the United States.

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Remarks delivered on senate floor, approximately 5:00 PM EST.