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**REID: REPUBLICANS STAND IN THE WAY OF HEALTH CARE REFORM FOR
AMERICAN FAMILIES AND SMALL BUSINESSES**

Washington, DC— *Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid made the following statement this morning on the floor of the U.S. Senate. Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery:*

“This new year began with so much hope. When we began the 111th Congress, I had hoped that Republicans would leave their partisan games in the 110th. I had hoped they would have listened when the American people reviewed their record and said ‘no’ to the Party of No.

“I wrote the following at the time – this past January: ‘We have no choice but to govern differently. The times demand it. If we do not govern differently, we will have taken no good lessons from the bad experience of the Bush years.’ That goes for Republicans and Democrats alike.

“In my first address to this chamber this year, I reminded both Republicans and Democrats that when we retreat to partisanship, when we fail to reach for common ground, we rob ourselves of the ability to create the change the American people demanded.

“As the health care debate approached in April, I reached out to our Republican colleagues and wrote this: ‘Rather than just saying no, you must be willing to offer concrete and constructive proposals. We cannot afford more of the obstructionist tactics that have denied or delayed Congress’ efforts to address so many of the critical challenges facing this nation.’

“Last week, I reminded the other side that our hands remain outstretched across the aisle. I assured them we still save them a seat at the negotiating table.

“And just yesterday, I encouraged our Republican friends to join with us to pass an important bill that would promote foreign travel to the United States – creating jobs, reducing our deficit and strengthening our economy in the process.

“At the beginning of this year, at the beginning of this Congress, at the beginning of this debate and even up to the beginning of this week, my commitment to bipartisanship and finding common ground has not changed one bit. Unfortunately, a stubborn group of Senate Republicans have not changed either.

“Yesterday, Republicans blocked a bill that had 11 Republican cosponsors. They blocked a bill that would support a trillion-dollar industry in an otherwise slow economy. They blocked a bill that would create 40,000 new jobs right here at home over the next year, that would cut our deficit by \$425 million over the next 10 years, and that would help our economy recover over the long run.

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised. Just last week, a Republican Senator said the following: 'Democrats need to know when they bring [bills] up, we're going to extend the debate as long as we can — even if we can't win it.'

“Given their commitment to obstruction, it is remarkable that we have gotten anything done this year – let alone such a strong catalog of important accomplishments that have helped us revive our economy, strengthen our national security, protect our environment, demand accountability, promote equality and ensure progress.

“But if Republicans are going to stand in the way of a bill that creates tens of thousands of new jobs, cuts our deficit by hundreds of millions of dollars and helps every single state in the union, how are we going to do the other important work the American people sent us here to do? If they do not want to create jobs and save our government money, what is it that do they want to do?

“As my good friend from North Dakota, Senator Dorgan, said yesterday on the floor: 'If we can't agree on a piece of legislation that was offered by over 50 Senators, Republicans and Democrats, dealing with promotion of tourism and creating jobs and promoting this country's economic interests by asking international tourists to come to America and see what America is all about – if we can't agree on that, how on earth will we get agreements on energy, health care, climate change and so on? It is so disappointing.'

“I couldn't put it any better myself. Reforming health care and pursuing energy independence are daunting tasks. No one claims it is simple, but everyone knows it is essential. No one claims the answer is obvious, but everyone knows we must work toward one.

“Yet if Republicans refuse to find common ground on the easy things, how will we do so on the hard ones?

“It is clear to anyone following this debate that our Republican friends are not interested in making the difficult but necessary decisions to dig our economy out of this ditch and move us further down the path to recovery and prosperity.

“Instead, they like to echo talking points written by pollsters. They like to repeat the tired, trite and baseless claim that if we reform health care – as 85 percent of Americans want us to – their care will be delayed and denied.

“Nothing could be further from the truth. First, let me state, once again, the facts. No matter what Republicans claim, the government has no intention of choosing for you any part of your medical plan – or meddling in any of your medical relationships. If you like the coverage you have, you can keep it.

“In fact, it’s the name of a whole section of the HELP Committee’s bill: Section 131 is called ‘No Changes to Existing Coverage.’ Every time you hear Republicans say otherwise, you know they are not interested in an honest debate.

“Second, let me reiterate, once again, the reality. The only thing being delayed is urgently needed reform that ensures all Americans have access to quality, affordable health care. The only thing at risk of being denied is Americans’ ability to stay healthy, get healthy or care for a loved one.

“It is being delayed and denied by a party that has made such stalling tactics their specialty.

“The Party of No has shown no interest in sitting down with us at the negotiating table. The Party of No has shown no interest in legislating. And I am most concerned that the Party of No has shown no interest in helping the 50 million Americans who are not insured, the 20 million more who are underinsured, and the millions more who are paying too much for a health care plan they could lose with just one pink slip, one accident or one illness.

“I remind my Republican colleagues once again: This is not about winning and losing. This not the time for ideology or intransigence. This is not the place for political games.

“For the millions of Americans who pay crushing health care costs, or those with no coverage at all, it is about a concrete and critical crisis that children, families and small businesses feel every single day.

“It is about the parent who cannot take a child to the doctor because insurance is prohibitively expensive. It is about the small business that has to lay off employees because it can’t afford skyrocketing health care premiums. It is about the three in five families who put off necessary medical care because it simply costs too much.

“American families in every one of our states are counting on us to work together in our common interest. They are not counting the political points scored by either side.

“Senate Democrats want nothing more than to work with Republicans to create a bipartisan health reform bill that assures quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

“That is why the HELP Committee has held 14 bipartisan roundtables, 13 committee hearings and 20 meetings of committee members to discuss various proposals – each one with the goal of reaching a bipartisan agreement.

“Hardworking Americans are too often the casualties of our broken health care system. They deserve better than to also be the casualties of this kind of politics.

“It is not too late for Republicans to join us for a serious discussion and a sincere dialogue about how to move this country forward. As I did at the beginning of this year, this Congress, this debate and this week, I still have hope that they will.”