

because all we want is for the government to be operational. We are not attaching any conditions—no conditions, zero conditions—to the government coming back and operating. The only party attaching conditions to the operation of the Federal Government is Republicans. This isn't a negotiation. We just want the government to be back open for business, with no extras.

But I am OK to have a debate on what the people think about the health care law. I don't think it should be: Well, we have the government shut down. I don't think there should be a gun to our head involving the paychecks of thousands of both government and civilian employees as well as the safety of our Nation and of our food and of our water and of our air. But let's have that debate. Polls are going to tell you people are still kind of divided as to whether they like the particulars of the law that we passed to reform our health care system, but they do not want it repealed. In fact, one of the most recent polls I looked at, which has been consistent with most everything I have seen, said that only 33 percent of Americans, just 1 out of 3, want the law repealed or delayed or defunded. By a 2-to-1 margin, people want the health care law implemented because they get that the current system is totally broken and they want a chance to try to fix it.

Second, by absolutely astounding, overwhelming margins the American people oppose the tea party's attempt to shut down the government unless the health care bill is repealed. Those numbers are even bigger. It is not 2-to-1, it is more like 3-to-1 or 4-to-1. The most recent Quinnipiac University poll said the American public opposes Republican efforts to shut down the Government over the defunding of the health care law by a 72-to-22 margin. And of course the next hostage that Republicans are going to take is the full faith and credit of the American government because they are not going to raise the debt ceiling unless they get a whole other set of conditions agreed to, and guess what. The American public does not want that either. By a slightly smaller margin of 64-to-27 percent the American public says pay your bills. Don't put a bunch of conditions, a bunch of political riders on just paying your bills.

When Americans fill the gas tank, they put their credit card in and pay the bill. They don't fill the tank and drive away, which is essentially what we would be doing if we agreed to a budget and then refused to pay the bills we incurred.

Third, beyond the polling on the specific repeal or delay, beyond the polling on the shutdown tactics that Republicans are using, do you want to know what people think of this health care law? Then just look at what happened over the last 48 hours after these exchanges opened. The volume at healthcare.gov continues to be astronomical. Even today on I think the

third day of implementation, 6.1 million unique visits in the first 24 hours; 190,000 calls into the HHS call center; 104,000 Web chats were requested.

I think the estimate is that about 15 million people are going to sign up for either the expanded Medicaid portion of the law or private insurance through the exchanges in the first year or so; 15 million are going to sign up over the entirety of the first year. On the first day, 6.1 million people went to check out whether they are going to get a better product. It is going to take a little while for all those people to sign up, but if 6 million people are just showing up on the Web site on day 1, admittedly shutting the thing down for a little while and making the Web site slow down significantly, that tells you people out there are desperate for cheaper insurance. And they are going to get it.

I saw someone who was quoted in the paper who looked at the rate they were going to get in the exchange versus what they were paying and they called it a "pocketbook changer." This changes people's lives. Not only will they get insurance for the first time but to the extent that today people are paying 20, 30, 40 percent more than they may have to pay on the exchange, that helps them and helps our economy because that money goes right back out into Main Street.

Mr. President, 6.1 million people went on the site in the first 24 hours because all of these sick people or parents with sick kids who have been waiting their entire lives to be able to get health care finally get it, because on the exchanges insurance companies cannot tell you "no" just because you are sick. I hate to tell my friends on the other side of the aisle but there is an enormous amount of really sick people out there who have been getting sicker because they cannot afford to go to a doctor. Why are there 6 million people showing up on the Web site on day 1? It is because there are a lot of people in trouble, in dire straits, who want insurance.

The reason there is a flood of interest in these exchanges is because people want cheaper and better health care and they are sick and tired of waiting around for it. But what they are even more sick and more tired of is this place playing games with life and death, because that is what this is to people out there. If they get access to health care, then they have a chance at a quality life. If they do not, they are going to get sick and a lot of people are not going to make it.

We should fund the Government, get it back up and operating. Speaker BOEHNER has the votes to pass a clean continuing resolution in the House tonight, today. He should call it up for a vote. He can pass it. We can pass it. The government can get back up and operating and then we can have a debate about whether people in this country want the health care law implemented. It may be that people from a certain Senator's State or a certain

congressional district may have different feelings. But the people of this country, both in the polling and in their response to the first 3 days of its implementation, have made it perfectly clear: They don't want this place to play games with the operation of the Federal Government. They do not support the tea party shutting down the Federal Government over their political beliefs and they want access—for the first time in many of their lives—to affordable health care.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry: Are we under a 10-minute time limit? Is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

TRIBUTE TO ERIK FATEMI

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, Erik Fatemi, the clerk of my appropriations subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, is leaving the Senate this week after 12 years of sterling service. On behalf of Senators from both sides of the aisle who have had the good fortune to work with Erik over the years, I would like to take a few minutes to express our gratitude.

Knute Rockne was probably the all-time great coach at Notre Dame, and he knew that the Almighty had a special feeling for that team. But Rockne was fond of saying: "I've found that prayers work best when you have big players."

Successful committee chairs in the Senate have the same approach. We know that it is not enough to be on the side of the angels; we have got to have big players. Here in the Senate, that means big intellect, big heart, big work ethic. And those are qualities that Erik Fatemi possesses in superabundance.

Erik joined my Appropriations staff in early 2001, a few months before Senator Jim Jeffords switched from Republican to Independent, giving Democrats back the majority in the Senate. So Erik has been in the minority with me, then the majority, then back to the minority, and now in the majority again.

Over the years, Erik has acquired a profound knowledge of the appropriations and legislative processes that is widely respected not just by Members and staff in this Chamber, but also in the administration. And with Erik, it's not only a matter of know-how, it is also a matter of know-who. Over the years, Erik developed important relationships of trust and respect, especially

with top researchers and institute directors at the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health since 2009, recently said about Erik: “Erik Fatemi stands out in my mind as one of the most effective staff members I have worked with on Capitol Hill. Erik is the exemplar of an effective appropriations staffer: he has always mastered any of the issues he’s been involved in and he has always demonstrated the ‘passion for anonymity’ of a loyal staff member. An expert on NIH, Erik has always been tough, fair and compassionate. He always asked the tough questions and would not give up until he got straight answers—whether it was from the NIH or the broader biomedical research community. And in all of his dealings with NIH and me, he has always kept uppermost in his mind the millions of patients and their families who count on the treatments, cures, and preventive measures that publicly-funded biomedical research makes possible. Throughout his career, in his dedication to his boss, Tom Harkin, and in his commitment to patients and their families, Erik Fatemi has been a superb Appropriations staffer and a model public servant.”

As notable as Dr. Collins praise is, I long ago lost track of the number of times people have thanked me for things that Erik played a huge role in getting done. Let me mention a few of his many accomplishments.

One signal achievement of my time as chair of the Appropriations subcommittee was collaborating with Senator Arlen Specter to double funding for the National Institutes of Health over a 5-year period. Erik played a very significant role in making that possible in 2001, 2002, and 2003—and that is something that he can be very proud of.

In the late 2000s, I was chief Senate sponsor of the Stem Cell Enhancement Act, to remove the administration’s arbitrary restrictions on stem cell research and Erik was my lead staffer on the bill. With Erik’s invaluable assistance, we passed the Stem Cell Enhancement Act twice in Congress with large bipartisan majorities. Unfortunately, the bill was also vetoed twice by President Bush. And do you know what. That is about the only thing that can stop Erik Fatemi: A veto by the President of the United States. The good news, of course, is that we ultimately prevailed, with President Obama’s executive order in early 2009.

During and after the great recession, Erik took the lead in identifying and responding to the impact the downturn could have on our Nation’s education system. He illustrated for me and other Members of Congress the devastating impact educator layoffs would have on our children’s education and our Nation’s future. The historic Recovery Act and the later Education Jobs Act kept hundreds of thousands of teachers and other educators in our schools, and

Erik helped me shape the debate and passage of those critical laws.

Erik played a key role in the creation of the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences at NIH, which is accelerating the pace of getting new cures and therapies to the patients who need them.

He also oversaw production of the 2012 report “Under Threat: Sequestration’s Impact on Nondefense Jobs and Services.” This was the first comprehensive State-by-State projections of the destructive impacts of sequestration on nondefense discretionary programs.

All of these accomplishments amply demonstrate Erik’s skills and talents as a top Senate staffer. But Erik is more than that. He is the quintessential humble public servant who works long hours on behalf of this institution and the people of the United States.

Let me cite just one aspect of that humble service. Over the years, Erik has spent countless hours explaining to thousands of constituents and advocates what was happening on Capitol Hill at any given moment. I can’t imagine how many times and to how many audiences he has patiently explained how the legislative process works, especially the arcane and sometimes bizarre workings of appropriations.

As a Senator, I have always appreciated that when Erik couldn’t tell my constituents the answer they wanted to hear—which, unfortunately is most of the time, especially these last few years—he would respond to every question and e-mail promptly and honestly. In dealings with Erik, people always know that he is listening and taking their concerns seriously.

Finally, I also want to express my appreciation to Erik’s family members, especially his wife Alisann and their beloved daughters, Caroline, Kathryn, and Anna Christina. They, too, have sacrificed as Erik has spent many late nights and weekends toiling in the Dirksen Building. It was not easy to experience those absences, but I hope you realize that Erik’s work has made a powerful difference for the American people.

Erik, I join with the entire Senate family in thanking you for your outstanding service. We wish you, Alisann, Caroline, Kathryn and Anna Christina much happiness in the years ahead.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, more and more interesting figures are coming in to my health committee from around the country with regard to what is happening around the Nation in terms of the health care marketplace, ObamaCare. The Republicans said it was going to be a failure and all that kind of stuff and how it was going to cost so much more money. I do not have it for every State. It is starting to come in. But I have it for some States and I want to give this body and people

watching some of the initial figures that have come in on the savings to families. For example, in Alabama, \$2,013 premiums for a family of four—median premium for month. This is just the average, take the median. In Alabama, for a family of four this year the premium was \$557.58 a month. We now know the marketplace premium, family of four making \$50,000 a year with the tax credits, their monthly premium will be \$112 a month, a savings of \$445.58 a month for a family of four making \$50,000 year in the State of Alabama.

In my State of Iowa, that median premium per month for a family of four this year was \$549.58. The marketplace premium for that family of four at \$50,000 with tax credits is now \$103 a month, for a savings of \$446.58 per month for that family of four.

I was looking at Oklahoma. Their median premium this year was \$684 a month. The marketplace premium for that family of four—again, \$50,000 a year—with their tax credits, believe it or not, is \$63 per month. They will go from \$684 to \$63 a month. Those families will have a savings of \$621 a month in the State of Oklahoma.

The median premium per month for a family of four in Texas this year is \$504.50. Their marketplace premium for a family of four making \$50,000 a year, after the tax credits, \$57 a month, for a savings of \$447.50 a month. It is an amazing savings.

Many of these people are getting insurance for the first time. Many of these people may have had a pre-existing condition or perhaps they worked in a job that did not give them health care coverage or perhaps they simply couldn’t afford \$500 a month in Texas, but now they can afford \$57 a month and get coverage for their family of four, and they will get a subsidy for buying that marketplace insurance.

Is this what the Republicans want to stop? Is this what they want so desperately to stop that they are willing to shut down government? They ought to talk to some of these families in Texas, Iowa, Alabama, Oklahoma, and Michigan.

The premium for a family of four in Michigan is \$381 a month this year. In the marketplace it will be \$80 a month.

Georgia’s premium for a family of four is \$448 a month this year and will go down to \$132 a month under the marketplace. That is what the Republicans want to stop? Well, I think we are seeing that what the Republicans really wanted to do was to keep the same old system we have where health insurance companies call the tune, you pay the price, and if you couldn’t afford it, tough luck, go to the emergency room. Now we are going to cover all Americans.

More and more information will come in, and as it comes in, I will take the floor to give more and more information about the call centers. Right now—in the last 2 days—over 7 million Americans have visited healthcare.gov