

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Kathryn D. Sullivan, of Ohio, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON SCHMIDTLEIN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the Schmidtlein nomination.

Who yields time?

Mr. REID. Madam President, I yield back all time that is available.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Rhonda K. Schmidtlein, of Missouri, to be a Member of the United States International Trade Commission?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON KERLIKOWSKE NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the Kerlikowske nomination.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I yield back all time that is available.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of R. Gil Kerlikowske, of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Customs, Department of Homeland Security?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON HAMMER NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the Hammer nomination.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I yield back any time that is available.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Michael A. Hammer, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Chile?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

VICTIMS PROTECTION ACT OF 2014—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Hawaii.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1821

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, nearly 4 months ago the most powerful

storm on record struck the Philippines, killing 6,000 people and injuring 27,000 people. According to USAID, more than 4 million people were displaced, and one out of six people in the country was affected. Photographs show the immense destruction caused by Typhoon Haiyan. In some areas nearly all of the buildings were destroyed.

Today, because of the magnitude of the devastation, the Philippines has not yet recovered. It will take them a long time. Relief efforts continue. These efforts have been aided by direct assistance from the U.S. Government to the Philippines, one of our closest allies in Asia. Relief efforts have also been funded by charitable donations made by individuals in the United States. Many of these donations come from Filipino Americans in this country, part of the extensive diaspora here that is the foundation of the deep connections between the Philippines and the United States.

I am about to ask unanimous consent to pass legislation that will encourage people to continue donating to typhoon relief efforts in the Philippines. It has been 4 months since Typhoon Haiyan but help is still desperately needed. Four months is a virtual eternity of news cycles, and other crises in other parts of the world demand our attention. But we should not forget the immense human suffering caused by Typhoon Haiyan.

This legislation, S. 1821, would allow people who make donations after the date of enactment to deduct those donations from last year's taxes. In other words, they can reduce their 2013 tax bill by contributing now. It is a modest step, but it is one we should take.

This is bipartisan legislation, cosponsored by Senator HELLER. This legislation is also cosponsored by Senator MENENDEZ and the majority leader, Senator REID. I thank them for their support.

Identical bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the House of Representatives by Representatives Swalwell and Thompson. That bill has 35 cosponsors, including 9 Republicans: Representatives CALVERT, FRANKS, GRIMM, HECK, ISSA, MILLER, ROYCE, VALADAO, and YOUNG. I thank them for their support.

After the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, Congress passed nearly identical legislation to encourage donations to that country. That legislation passed by unanimous consent in the Senate. The Senate companion bill, S. 2936, had 40 cosponsors, 15 of whom were Republicans. They included Senators ALEXANDER, CORNYN, ENZI, GRASSLEY, HATCH, JOHANNES, ROBERTS, and THUNE. I hope the Senate will provide the same support to the Philippines that it provided to Haiti.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Finance Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1821; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the Hirono-Heller amendment,

which is at the desk, be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; further, that upon passage, the bill be held at the desk, and that if the Senate receives from the House a bill, the text of which is identical to S. 1821, as passed by the Senate, the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration, the bill be read three times and passed, without any intervening action or debate; finally, that passage of the Senate bill be vitiated and the bill be indefinitely postponed, and all motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, reserving the right to object, first, I commend the Senator from Hawaii for her work and her concern over the Philippines. That country has suffered dramatically from this typhoon. Having lived on the gulf coast and walked in the places where 18 feet of water from Hurricane Katrina flooded us, washed away whole structures, I can imagine what it was like to have lost 6,000 lives. And the country is hurting. It is a great country with great people. They are excellent allies of the United States. I am very sympathetic to their needs and appreciative of the Senator's efforts in seeking this way to further contributions for their relief.

The legislation has an emergency declaration in it. That requires going through the Budget Committee and requires other findings that I am not sure are available here. I think the legislation could be perhaps drafted slightly differently, I say to the Senator, that would avoid the emergency designation part, and maybe we could reach an accord to get this done quickly, as I know the Senator wants to move on it as soon as possible.

So, Madam President, I at this time say I will object. But our staffs will immediately begin to discuss if we can put this in a little slightly different way that would accomplish the Senator's goals without offending some of the budget niceties. Being the ranking Republican on the Budget Committee, I feel very, very strongly that when we make agreements about how we are going to spend money and how it should be processed, the more we erode those agreements and the more we spend above the amount of money we agreed to spend or get around the spending limits we ourselves passed into law, the more we place at risk the financial future of the country.

This is not the most costly measure. It is a step that would help the people in the Philippines, I know. But with that explanation, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I thank Senator SESSIONS very much for his agreement regarding the concerns we have for our friends in the Philippines, and I look forward to working

with the Senator to come up with a measure that will accomplish what my bill seeks to accomplish.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I thank the Senator, and I respect so much her effort in this cause and will do what we can to be cooperative.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

OBAMACARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I have come to visit with you today and the Members of this body with some concerns I have about people who are being impacted by the health care law. By "impacted" I mean hurt. Their lives are being hurt as a result of the impact of the health care law. We are seeing it around the country. As people are trying to comply with the law, we are finding that many people are losing their jobs or part of their jobs if they are working part time—to be held under 30 hours a week because under that criteria, people working less than 30 hours a week do not have to be provided with health insurance.

We have seen stories around the country of municipalities, of public employees who are having their hours cut and as a result, obviously, their take-home pay is cut, their wages are cut as a result of the impact of the health care law, as communities try to comply with all the aspects of the law. We have seen it with police forces, with teachers, with coaches, busdrivers, custodians, cafeteria workers, office clerks, sanitation workers, emergency personnel, university faculty—people all around the country who are being hurt as a result of the law.

Members of the Senate come from my side of the aisle to read letters of folks who have been harmed by the health care law. The majority leader comes to the floor and says these stories are lies. These are stories from people at home to whom I talk on weekends. I will be this weekend in Buffalo, WY, at the health fair, having a chance to visit with folks who are from Wyoming who go to a health fair for low-cost blood screening; also go to visit booths that are there from the heart association, the cancer society, the diabetes association, all taking efforts to try to improve the quality of their life, the quality of their care, and the quality of their overall health.

It is interesting to hear from these people, because I do not think the President hears from them. When I hear the majority leader say the people who come to the floor to talk about them—that these stories are lies, it is calling the people of Wyoming who have honest concerns about the way their lives are being impacted by the health care law as being untruthful.

I have come to the floor with more letters today and to talk about some things. It does make me wonder, when the majority leader comes and says these things are not truthful if he is not hearing the stories from the police officers and the teachers, the coaches and the bus drivers, the custodians, the

cafeteria workers, the office clerks, the sanitation workers, the emergency personnel, the university faculty in States all around the country who have their lives impacted by the health care law.

What I do think is that other Senators, Senators who perhaps go home more often than the majority leader, Senators who maybe listen to their constituents more and read the letters, are seeing the damage that is being done by the health care law because the President is responding to their claims, their concerns, and to the point that the President himself has unilaterally delayed many components of the health care law.

These are the delays from 2013. Here is the calendar for the year. All of the X's are different days when there have been different delays. There have been dozens of delays as a result of the health care law impact on families across the country. I wish to read a couple of emails about the impact on lives of people in Wyoming.

This is from a gentleman from Casper, my hometown. I was there Monday. I will be there again tomorrow.

He writes:

My wife and I just received our new monthly premium information for our health insurance. As of March 1, 2014 it will go from \$505 a month to \$1,045 a month, an increase of over double. This is for a Bronze level plan with a high deductible and high out of pocket.

You know, I wish the President would actually kind of understand what the impact of this law has been on American families. I wish people who supported it, campaigned for it, would realize the impact on people's lives. He has gotten his premiums going from \$505 to over \$1,000, double increase, Bronze level plan, what the President wants people to have. It is the minimum level. It has a high deductible and a high out-of-pocket.

He said:

It is also the cheapest plan I have found so far for us that is available in Wyoming and complies with the ACA.

Because the law says this man needs a lot of insurance. Maybe he does not need it. The President does not know this man, does not know his life, does not know his history, does not know what he actually needs in terms of insurance. But the President claims and the Democrats who voted for this health care law believe they know better than this man what he needs.

But you know what we do find out, when he wants to comply with the law, his insurance premiums more than double, for the cheapest plan which has the highest deductible and the highest out-of-pocket.

He says:

This increase will mean that money we would probably have spent elsewhere will now need to be budgeted for the insurance increase.

We go across the State to Moran, WY. Another resident of Wyoming writes:

I am a resident of Wyoming and about half of my income comes from Social Security.

My benefits total \$958 a month. In addition to that, I work part time at a ranch. It is a seasonal job from May to October. I make about the same amount there as I do from Social Security. I have recently managed to submit an application for health care through the healthcare.gov Web site. The cost to me with my current income would be a low end of \$837 a month with a \$4,000 deductible. With the high end, it would be over \$1,300 a month with a \$1,000 deductible.

Neither of those amounts are possible with my income range. I would not be able to afford to live. Now I refigured this with only my Social Security income and found that it would be very affordable, lower deductible, lower premiums, but I wouldn't have the income. I could possibly afford that but would have to live in a very substandard poverty lifestyle by quitting working.

So he has these options: He can continue what he does, but he cannot afford the insurance, or he can get affordable insurance by quitting working but then cannot afford to live. This is what the President of the United States and the Democrats have given the people of America.

He said:

I would like to work and contribute as long as I'm able but things are looking pretty bleak for me.

This is a man who wants to work. This is a man who wants to work, but the health care law is making it a lot harder for him to do so. He said:

I am giving you this information in the hope that it will be of some value in combating the unfairness of the Affordable Care Act.

The unfairness of the Affordable Care Act. I have to believe that Senators on both sides of the aisle who actually go home and listen to their constituents hear about this, hear these stories, hear these stories all around the country, of the unfairness of the Affordable Care Act.

He then goes on and says:

Thank you so much for your service to your country and the great State of Wyoming.

So here we have dozens of delays—and this is last year. Now it has happened again. Just yesterday the President came up with another delay. It is interesting the way it has made the front page of the New York Times, a paper that has supported the President, supported the law, front page, above the fold, story by Robert Pear.

The Obama administration, grappling with continued political fallout over its health care law, said Wednesday that it would allow consumers to renew health insurance policies that did not comply with the new law for two more years—

This is the New York Times speaking, front page, above the fold. This is not me. But they are repeating the kind of things I have been saying.

pushing the issue well beyond this fall's mid-term elections.

So what is the idea here? Push it out beyond the elections, make people not see the reality and the danger and the damage that is coming their way until after they vote.

The article goes on, front page above the fold, today's New York Times:

The reprieve was the latest in a series of waivers, deadline extensions and unilateral actions by the administration—

Here you have them. This is just in 2013. Now we have more in 2014.

—unilateral actions by the administration that have drawn criticism from the law's opponents and supporters, many saying President Obama was testing the limits of his powers.

I believe that. I believe the President has gone way beyond the limits of his powers.

The action reflects the difficulties Mr. Obama—

The President of the United States, who told the American people, if they like what they have they can keep it; if they like their doctor, they can keep their doctor; who said insurance premiums would go down—all of which are untrue, one called the 'lie of the year.'

The action reflects the difficulties Mr. Obama has faced in trying to build support for the Affordable Care Act and the uproar over his promise—which he later acknowledged has been overstated—that people who liked their insurance plans could keep them, no matter what.

Over 5 million Americans got letters of cancellation, 3,500 in the State of Wyoming. A woman with a wonderful policy that worked for her, worked for her family, lost her insurance because it did not cover maternity care. She writes to me as a doctor and says:

Dr. BARRASSO, please explain to the President of the United States that I have had a hysterectomy. I don't need maternity coverage.

You would think the President would understand that. You would think the Democrats who shoved this health care law down the throats of the American people would understand that as well.

This is interesting. Still on the front page of this morning's New York Times:

Under pressure from Democratic candidates who are struggling to defend the President's signature domestic policy, Mr. Obama in November announced a one-year reprieve for insurance plans that did not meet the minimum coverage requirements of the 2010 health care law.

Wednesday's action goes much further, essentially stalling for two more years one of the central tenets of the much-debated law, which was supposed to eliminate what White House officials called substandard insurance and junk policies.

If this is what the President believes, why is he now coming out and having a delay announced—not coming to Congress, not saying: Hey, let's try to do something a little differently. Let me propose this. Let's have a bipartisan agreement to come up with some solutions to actually help people get what they wanted in the beginning with health care reform, the care they need from a doctor they choose at lower costs.

The letters I am reading show people not being able to do that. They are paying much higher rates for things they do not need, will never use. We are hearing from people all across the

country who are losing their doctor, can't keep their doctor, higher out-of-pocket costs.

We hear now the President wants to do some things unilaterally because a group of Democratic Senators who are up for reelection are worried about their political future, not about the future of the American people and the health care of the American people. That is why they are doing this.

You say: No, that seems like an exaggeration.

Well, let's go on. This next paragraph in the New York Times this morning:

The extension could help Democrats in tight midterm election races because it may avoid the cancellation of policies that would otherwise have occurred at the height of the political campaign season this fall.

So the cancellations are still going to happen, people are still going to continue to be hurt. We have over 5 million people who have gotten letters of cancellation. It is not saying: Oh, the cancellations are never going to happen. It is saying: It will push them out until after the election, so people will not be so irritated, angry, and aggravated at the Democrats who voted for it, in an effort to try to save their elections, try to save their Senate seats, but not to help the American people.

This goes on:

In announcing the new transition policy, the Department of Health and Human Services said it had been devised "in close consultation with members of Congress," and it gave credit to a number of Democrats in competitive races, including Senators Mary L. Landrieu of Louisiana, Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire and Mark Udall of Colorado.

So the reason that the White House goes time after time, all these delays, all this and that, is not to help the American people; it is not to help patients; it is not to help the providers of health care; it is not to help the taxpayers; it is to help a couple of Democratic Senators whom they name—whom the Secretary of Health and Human Services names as recipients of the help because the President is worried about Democrats losing elections this fall.

The Hill newspaper yesterday. "New ObamaCare delay to help midterm Dems." Not to help Americans, not to help the people from my State who write letters about the concerns of their lives, not to help all of those people about whom my colleagues and I continue to come to the floor with letters to tell their stories, to tell about their lives, to tell about the pain they are suffering because of the health care law.

It is not about the failed Web site. We all know the Web site. The President said: It will be as easy to use as Amazon, cheaper than your cell phone bill. You will be able to keep your doctor—several days before the Web site opened and crashed. No, it is more than about the Web site. It is about people's lives. It is about if they are able to keep their doctor. It is about cuts to Medicare Advantage and hurting our seniors who are having a harder time

getting doctors. It is about people paying higher premiums. It is about people having higher out-of-pocket costs, higher copays, higher deductibles. It is all of those things.

It is about hospitals in States that are not part of any of these exchanges, people in the communities cannot go there, they have to travel further distances. Nope, the President is not doing this for any of those reasons, not to help any of those people, he is doing it to help midterm Democrats because they are afraid they are going to lose their States, their majority, afraid they are going to be impacted and thrown out of office for absolutely reckless behavior on the part of a Congress that did not work in a bipartisan way, shoved the health care law down the throats of the American people in a way not to improve their lives, but to say that Congress knows better than people back home.

I am going to continue to come to the floor with letters and stories. I will be at the health fair in Buffalo, WY, on Saturday morning talking to folks in my community, seeing what they have to say about their lives, their families, their jobs, their wages, those of them who are losing jobs or losing hours as a result of the health care law, those who cannot afford new insurance under the exchanges even though they had insurance they liked—even though they did not like the price, it was cheaper than it is now. The President said it wasn't good enough for them.

I am going to continue to work for solutions to help patients all across this country have patient-centered care—not government-centered care or insurance company-centered care—to help patients get the care they need from a doctor they chose at lower cost—a complete failure by this administration and by this health care law.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. 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. MURPHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for such time as I may consume.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut is recognized for that purpose.