

around to serve, but we are not serving new Medicare patients.

Joanna in Kansas City said her son goes to college where he is required to have health insurance. His health insurance he gets through the school has increased 40 percent this year.

Wayne in Moberly said his premiums and prescription drug costs have increased and he is concerned it is because of all the new requirements that have to be met. He said: “The future does not look good from where I stand as a small business owner and a farmer.”

Donna in Napoleon, MO, said her insurance had gone from \$93 twice a month to \$156 twice a month. The interesting point in her letter is she said her insurance would go up even more if she gets a chance to work more. There is a lot to be said for assisting people to get health insurance who cannot otherwise afford to get health insurance, but one of the things I never heard debated in any extensive way is what happens when people are at the edge of moving to a new level of work which then gives them a lower level of benefit.

Donna is saying that if she gets to work more hours, she will have less assistance buying her health insurance and her health insurance goes up. The government should not be in the business of looking for ways to encourage people not to work, as in the part-time work we see all over the country now.

One of the great workplace impacts of the health care law was that the government for the first time ever said to most employers—employers of more than 50 people—you have to provide health insurance to anybody who works 30 hours a week. So what did employers for the first time hear the government saying? If someone works less than 30 hours a week, they don’t have to have to provide health insurance. So employer after employer made the decision that for new employees we are going to hire three people at 27 or 28 hours a week rather than two people at 40 hours. We are going to meet our workforce needs in a new way. Consequently, those individuals don’t have coverage. Many individuals at that level of hourly work who used to have coverage no longer have coverage. An awful lot of companies used to provide coverage at half time—at 20 hours—but if the government says they don’t have to provide it until 30 hours, it turns out a lot of people don’t work more than 30 hours because they don’t have an opportunity or maybe they work almost 60 hours, but they have to work 60 hours at two different jobs, as did a lady I mentioned just last week who contacted our office.

David in Kansas City said he is retired from the railroad industry, and on April 1 his former company canceled plans for retirees 65 and older. David had access to a retiree plan from the railroad industry. He doesn’t have that anymore.

A lot of companies have done that, not just the railroad industry. IBM an-

nounced they would no longer provide health care coverage for their retirees. As soon as the retirees are 65 and older they are placed on Medicare, but what kind of supplement do they have? They used to have a supplement that was part of a big IBM plan and now they don’t have that anymore. UPS announced the dependents and spouses who are in part of the UPS family wouldn’t have insurance anymore. The unintended consequences keep on coming, and we need to continually look at what we need to do to see that people have access to great health care.

We are talking now—as we should be—about veterans health care and how veterans could have access to great health care. This is the moment right now where we can look at this issue in a new way. The veterans service organizations are looking at this issue. Alternatives are good. Veterans should have the best health care, in the best location for them, in the best way the taxpayers can provide it.

The Veterans’ Administration should be the best at some things. They should be better than anybody else at dealing with IED accidents, eye injuries, the loss of limbs, and other issues that are unique to veterans in unfortunate numbers because of the kind of conflicts in which we have been involved. Nobody should be better at that than the VA.

The VA may be the absolute best place to go for a particular injury, such as post-traumatic stress. Our veterans have problems because of the conflicts they have been in, but they also have problems because the National Institutes of Health says one out of four adult Americans has a diagnosable mental health problem. In a hearing a couple months ago, I asked the Secretary—the Surgeon General of the Army and the other forces about this: Do you think that is reflected in the military, and the answer was yes. She said: We recruit from the general population. We don’t have any reason to believe our population serving in the military doesn’t reflect similarly with regard to mental health issues. Some of those mental health issues, such as post-traumatic stress, the VA should be better than anybody else at, but a lot of mental health issues in the VA, there is no reason they should be any better than any of the other facilities. Veterans may have to drive to another State to get to a veterans facility or have to drive 120 miles or 150 miles in the VA’s van transportation. If that is what someone wants to do as a veteran, I think we ought to be sure veterans can do that, but if veterans want to get better care closer to home, more choices, we should do that.

Let the Veterans’ Administration compete to be the best at what they can provide. There is no particular reason to believe the Veterans’ Administration is going to be better than everybody in the country at normal internal medicine. There is no reason to believe the Veterans’ Administration is

going to be the best at dealing with cancer or heart issues or other issues. If there is a veterans hospital that somehow has figured out how to do that, fine, but don’t make veterans drive 120 miles by a dozen facilities that can do just as well or better because we have decided to put people in a system that is totally defined by the government.

One of the things we are learning is people can make better choices in so many areas than when the government makes those choices for them. So as we think about our veterans, as we think about what we can do to be sure they get the best care, that they are honored, their service is honored in a way they were led to believe it would be honored, this is a great time to have this discussion.

So whether it is health care for everybody else or health care for veterans, the Congress of the United States—and the country—has probably never been in a better position to talk about these issues. We see the unintended consequences of taking steps in the wrong direction. Now is a great time for our veterans and health care generally to see what we could do to take steps in the right direction.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New York.

MR. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

MR. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise to point out it has now been 342 days since the Senate passed bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform that would secure our border, turbocharge America’s economic growth and provide a chance to heal America’s broken families who are being separated by our dysfunctional immigration system.

Here is what we know: The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office told us that had we passed the bill this last year, we could have already seen up to \$80 billion of economic growth, \$20 billion of deficit reduction, 50,000 new jobs, \$50 billion more in the Social Security trust fund, \$2 billion of revenue for State and local governments, and 40,000 more brilliant STEM—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—graduates stay in the United States instead of being told to go home.

Instead, we have not been able to achieve any of these important gains. Why is that? It is because the House has refused to do anything—underline anything—to try and fix our broken immigration system. To be clear, the

real problem is not that there is a difference of opinion between a House bill and a Senate bill on immigration that cannot be reconciled. The problem is there is no House bill.

We are happy to meet our colleagues in the House part of the way. We would love to sit down and negotiate, but there is no House bill. So the problem is not that the two sides are irreconcilable, it is that one side has refused to do anything. The problem is that House Republicans have completely abdicated their responsibility to address important issues such as fixing our broken immigration system.

For the last few weeks I have explained the reason the House has done nothing on immigration is because the House Republican leadership has handed the gavel of leadership on immigration to far-right extremists such as Congressman STEVE KING. He is truly extreme on this issue. STEVEN KING says to do nothing—absolutely nothing—and the House does nothing, absolutely nothing.

Well, not only has this point not been refuted by anyone in the Republican Party, it has actually been even further confirmed in the last few days.

Let's start with STEVE KING himself. Last week KING filed an amendment to the Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriations bill that would require the Department of Justice to "investigate" the Department of Homeland Security's use of prosecutorial discretion toward certain immigrants, including beneficiaries of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or the DACA Program, that the Obama administration announced in June of 2012.

When discussing his amendment, STEVE KING—listen to this—pejoratively referred to the DACA Program as "Deferred Action for Criminal Aliens." That is what he thinks. He thinks that every immigrant is a criminal. When describing this program, STEVE KING said:

For everyone who's a valedictorian, there's another 100 out there who weigh 130 pounds—and they've got calves the size of cantaloupes because they have been hauling 75 pounds of marijuana across the border.

Was KING criticized for these comments? Was he chastised and told he has no place in a modern Republican Party? Was KING's amendment at least ignored in the same way every other immigration bill has been ignored?

Unfortunately, the answer to all of these questions is no. For the second time in a year, the House Republican leadership actually rewarded KING and handed him the gavel yet again by giving him another vote on another politically motivated appropriations amendment. The amendment to investigate the DACA Program is what received a vote last week. Just as before, the House passed yet another inflammatory King appropriations amendment along partisan lines. His previous amendment was to defund the DACA Program.

This is a man who just last week compared immigrants to Santa Ana's army. He compared immigrants to a foreign invading army. It is a comparison that implies that an immigrant's goal is to harm the interest of the United States when they desperately want to be here and participate in the freedom—both economic and political—we love and enjoy. Yet again, after he said something like this, the Republican leadership hands him the gavel on immigration. That is why we continue to see nothing out of the House other than inflammatory, rhetorical amendment show votes. The score is clear: STEVE KING is still undefeated, and he is increasing his margin of victory every day.

Well, it doesn't have to be that way. STEVE KING doesn't represent the vast number of voters in either the Republican Party or even the tea party. STEVE KING does not represent Republicans in this House. When we joined together on a moderate bipartisan bill that would do so much good for America, it was supported by traditional Republican groups—the business community, the high-tech community, the agricultural growers, the Catholic Church, the evangelical Protestant church, supported this bipartisan bill. Some on the left thought it was too conservative.

It doesn't have to be this way. STEVE KING doesn't have to write into law whatever the House does. Poll after poll is clear that even Republican voters—conservative Republican voters—want to fix our broken immigration system in a manner that secures our borders, fixes our legal immigration system, and allows those in the undocumented status to get right with the law after a long path, including paying fines, paying back taxes, learning English, having to work, and going to the back of the line and waiting.

STEVE KING is much like the Wizard of Oz when it comes to immigration. He is pulling the levers behind the screen to make it seem he has the power, but the Republican Party will learn sooner or later—as Dorothy did in the "Wizard of Oz"—that KING actually works by fear, and he doesn't have the power and the wizard's power is overstated. He can't really do very much. The only way to get back home and do something real is in ourselves, not in that man behind the screen—the Wizard of Oz, STEVE KING. Where are the leaders in the Republican Party with the courage to stand up to STEVE KING and the far right and say: Enough is enough, we will not let our authority be hijacked by extremists whose xenophobia causes them to prefer maintaining a broken immigration system, where hundreds of thousands still cross the border illegally, instead of achieving a fair, tough, and practical long-term solution?

Make no mistake, immigration reform will either pass this year with bipartisan support and a bipartisan imprint or it will pass in a future year

with only Democratic support and a Democratic imprint because Democrats control Congress and the White House. Some Democrats argue it is better for us politically if the latter occurs, and many Republicans, in their hearts, know that is true. But we don't want that. We want to fix our country's problems. We want our GDP to grow 3.5 percent as the GPO said it would if we pass this bill. We want to secure our borders once and for all. We want a fair path to citizenship so that people who work and pay taxes can get right with the law.

Time is running out. We have less than 8 weeks to go to get something passed. There is still no serious proposal from Republicans. If the House fails to act during this window, the President would be more than justified in acting anytime after the summer is over to make whatever changes he feels are necessary to make our immigration system work better for those who are unfairly burdened by our broken laws, but that is not the preferable way to go. The preferable way to go is to go the way the Senate did where Democrats and Republicans banded together to create a moderate, thoughtful, comprehensive bill that fixes our broken immigration system once and for all.

In conclusion, I hope the immigration reform bill passes this year because our economy, our broken families, and our country so badly need it. Let's hope the House finally stops talking and finally stops paying obeisance to their Wizard of Oz on immigration, STEVE KING, and starts acting.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from Wyoming.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I come to the floor as the Senate begins the debate on the nomination of Sylvia Burwell to be Secretary of Health and Human Services. If she is confirmed for that job, she would be responsible for implementing thousands of pages of regulations related to the President's health care law. I think it is appropriate, as we consider this nomination, to take a little bit of time and talk about the state of the President's health care law.

Just this morning I visited with a number of people from Uinta County, WY. I will tell you what they know and what we all know, and that is there are many dangerous side effects of the law, such as people losing access to their doctor and getting smaller paychecks.

Today I want to talk specifically about the expensive side effect so many Americans are facing, and that is how much health insurance premiums are rising because of the law. States are starting to release the proposed premiums insurance companies expect to charge next year under the Obama health care law. The numbers are not good for the American people—for people who wanted affordable care, quality