

year to year—not that we are controlling the rate of increase but that the Affordable Care Act isn't succeeding unless rates are going down. I heard my colleague from Wyoming make this claim about Connecticut a few weeks ago in which I was talking about rates going up by 1 percent and the claim was made: Well, that is not good enough.

People have been used to 10-, 15-, 20-, 30-percent increases in premiums in Connecticut. They are pretty happy with a .1-percent reduction. Frankly, they are pretty happy with a 3.1-percent increase. That is because of the Affordable Care Act.

So there is all the data. There it is. That is just the tip of the iceberg. Costs are going down, more people have insurance, and quality is getting better. It seems as though we open the paper every week and there is some new piece of good information.

I get it. This needs to be better. This needs to be perfected. The law still has warts. The Senator sitting in the Presiding Officer's chair is leading the fight to make this law work even better for people. I look forward to being involved in that conversation. But that is where the conversation should be—perfection, not repeal. And we are reminded again that if Republicans were to win control of this body, at the top of their agenda would be this same old fight—53 different votes in the House of Representatives over the past several years—to repeal the law without any real tangible plan to improve it.

This morning I met with a good friend of mine whom I have spoken about on this floor before, but because she is here in town I wish to speak about her one more time, and that is Betty Berger. Betty is here with the American Cancer Society. We will see them all over the Hill today in their light-blue shirts. Betty is arguing for a lot of things to happen here, with research funding increases at the top of the list, but she is also here to make a very personal case to protect the Affordable Care Act.

Years ago Betty's family was faced with a terrible choice when her son was diagnosed with cancer. In the 1-week period of time her family didn't have health care insurance—her husband had one job and he switched jobs—in the 1-week period of time between when he went from the first job to the second job, the diagnosis of cancer came down and it became a preexisting condition not covered by the new employer. Betty's family was left to pay for their son's cancer treatments on their own. They eventually lost their home, they lost their savings, and they had to declare bankruptcy.

Unfortunately, Betty's story is pretty familiar. Half of all bankruptcies in this country are due to stories very similar to Betty's. A mistimed illness at a point where the family didn't have insurance results in them losing everything.

The reality is that the Affordable Care Act makes sure that Betty's story

never has to be told again, that no family ever has to make the choice between declaring bankruptcy, saving their home, protecting their savings, or choosing to care for a loved one.

Let's talk about making this bill better, but let's recognize that the data, the numbers tell only one story; that is, the Affordable Care Act is working. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, as Republicans have come to the floor week after week ever since the President's health care law was passed. I have many concerns about the way this health care law is impacting families in my home State of Wyoming as well as families all across the country. In one State after another, people are feeling the devastating side effects of the health care law.

President Obama says Democrats who voted for the health care law should, as he said, "forcefully defend and be proud of the law."

I heard earlier today the Kaiser Family Foundation's report being quoted. What they said is that premiums have gone up, on average, \$3,500 from 2009 for family workplace coverage, plus the deductibles are higher. So premiums are up \$3,500 since 2009 for family workplace coverage, and the deductibles are higher—higher money paid out-of-pocket.

The President of the United States said they would go down by \$2,500 per family. NANCY PELOSI said they would go down for everyone. She was the Speaker of the House. She was the one who said: First you have to pass it before you get to find out what is in it. Americans have found out what is in it, and they don't like it. People do not like what they see with the President's health care law. It continues to be very unpopular.

So I ask, is the President really proud that families all across the country are suffering because of his health care law and the many dangerous side effects they are now having to live with?

Let's look around the country a little bit and see what the new headlines are bringing, and there are new headlines every day. In Virginia a television station in Charlottesville, WVIR, reported on what is happening there. Last Wednesday they had a report which said that "nearly a quarter million Virginians will have to change their insurance plans this fall." The President said: If you like what you have, you can keep it. Not in Virginia. A quarter of a million Virginians will have to change their insurance plans this fall. It is because the plans don't include all of a very long list of things Washington mandates have to be offered.

Even if a person had an insurance plan that worked well for their family,

that met their needs, the President and Democrats in this body say: Sorry, you can't keep it. The President said: If you like your plan, you can keep it. What happened there? At least 27 Democrats stood on the floor of the Senate and said: If you like what you have, you can keep it. If you like your plan, you can keep your plan. That is what they said. What happened? Was this intentionally to deceive the American people? Why are nearly a quarter of a million Virginians losing their insurance plan?

The head of the Virginia Association of Health Plans says it is simple. He told the TV station: "We're not allowed to offer those plans anymore." The President said they could, and now these people are being told by the law they are not allowed to even offer the plans to people who want to buy them because it works for them.

Are the Democrats in the Senate willing to forcefully defend the fact that 250,000 people in Virginia will have to buy new plans that they don't want, don't need, and many can't afford, with all of these additional provisions Washington says have to be included? To me, that is a very expensive and unnecessary side effect of the President's health care law.

But it is not just people's health care plans. People are concerned about keeping their doctors and keeping their hospitals that they go to in their own communities. Let's take a look at what happened in Connecticut, in a report that came out. Hartford Courant: "Five Connecticut Hospitals Could Leave Anthem's Network on October 1." What about the people who go to those hospitals and get their health care coverage that way? What are those people supposed to do? The President said: If you like your plan, you can keep your plan. If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. If you like your hospital, you can keep your hospital. These people may be losing their hospital come October 1.

Here is another side effect of the law that is hitting middle-class Americans and their wallets. It is the part of the law that says the workweek is no longer 40 hours. Now it is just 30 hours. That is what the law says. People who are working part time have had their hours cut to below 30 hours, and they are getting lower take-home pay. I hear about this in Wyoming. I hear it from school district workers, from folks who have had their hours cut, who are having to get by with less pay because if they have their hours cut, their take-home pay goes down. It is another destructive side effect of this health care law.

It is not just Wyoming; it is happening all around the country. In Louisiana there was a report by KNOE television in Monroe last Thursday which said that 400 employees within Lincoln Parish schools—people who work within the school system—are getting their hours cut in half. Four hundred workers, one school district, Louisiana, half

the hours, half the pay. Where did the school board put the blame? They put it directly on the President's health care law. They said they can't afford the Washington-mandated health insurance for all of their workers, so they are cutting back on the hours for substitute teachers, cutting the hours for cafeteria workers, cutting the hours for custodians, for paraprofessionals who work with the kids. Is that what the President envisioned? Is that what the President means when he says "forcefully defend and be proud"? Cutting back things for children in our schools, is that the President's solution for health care, making it harder for kids to get an education and making it harder for teachers to teach?

One custodian told the paper that it is depressing knowing his pay is about to be cut. He said, "It's rough the way it is. Why make it harder to survive?" That is my question to the President of the United States and to Senators on the floor who come to talk about the health care law.

Why make it harder to survive? Why, Mr. President? You said people should forcefully defend and be proud of this law. Are you proud of it, Mr. President? That is what I need to know. That is what the American public wants to know.

Is the President proud that people are getting their hours cut in half specifically because of his law? And school districts are pointing to that as the cause. Is the President proud he is making it harder for Americans to survive?

Now, some people aren't just getting their hours cut; they can't get hired in the first place because of the health care law. That is what one business owner said in an op-ed for the Charlotte Observer newspaper in Charlotte, NC. It ran September 10 and was entitled "How ObamaCare jams a stick in my company's wheels." Rodney Pitts, who runs the Southern Elevator Company in North Carolina, says he wants to hire more elevator mechanics for his business, but he hasn't been able to hire anyone this year. Why? He says the main reason is because of the costs associated with the health care law and all of the requirements of the health care law. He said, "Thousands of businesses in Charlotte and in North Carolina are in the same holding pattern."

So people all across the country who want to work won't get that opportunity because businesses can't afford to take on all of the extra costs of the President's health care law. That is an extremely destructive side effect of the law. It is hurting American families.

This health care law is hurting our economy. Every Democrat in the Senate voted for this health care law—every one. Where are the Democrats willing to forcefully defend these alarming side effects of this health care law? Is the President ready to go to North Carolina and talk to this business owner? Is the President going to say he is proud his health care law is

keeping the businesses from hiring more people in North Carolina and all across the country?

This isn't the kind of health care reform the American people needed. It is not the kind of health care reform the American people wanted. People didn't want a law that forced them to get rid of the insurance which they had and liked and which worked for them and for their families. They didn't want a law that forced their local schools to cut the hours of custodians and part-time teachers, cafeteria workers, and people who look after their children. That is not how to help people in a community.

These are the tragic side effects of the President's health care law. Republicans are going to continue to talk good patient-centered reforms, reforms that get patients across the country the care they need from a doctor they choose and at a lower cost.

We are going to talk about restoring people's freedom, freedom to buy health insurance that works for them, for their families because they know what works best for them, not President Obama. We are going to talk about giving people choices, not Washington mandates. Republicans are going to keep offering real solutions for better health care without all of these intrusive and intolerable side effects.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:31 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JEFFERY MARTIN BARAN TO BE A MEMBER OF THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

NOMINATION OF STEPHEN G. BURNS TO BE A MEMBER OF THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk reported the nominations of Jeffery Martin Baran, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30,

2015; and Stephen G. Burns, of Maryland, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the term of five years expiring June 30, 2019.

VOTE ON BARAN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on the Baran nomination.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to yield back all time on both sides.

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

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Jeffery Martin Baran, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2015?

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 56, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 265 Ex.]

YEAS—56

Baldwin	Heinrich	Nelson
Begich	Heitkamp	Pryor
Bennet	Heller	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Reid
Booker	Inhofe	Rockefeller
Boxer	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Brown	Kaine	Schatz
Cantwell	King	Schumer
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Landrieu	Stabenow
Casey	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Levin	Udall (CO)
Donnelly	Markey	Udall (NM)
Durbin	McCaskill	Walsh
Feinstein	Menendez	Warner
Franken	Merkley	Warren
Gillibrand	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Hagan	Murphy	Wyden
Harkin	Murray	

NAYS—44

Alexander	Enzi	Moran
Ayotte	Fischer	Murkowski
Barrasso	Flake	Paul
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Roberts
Chambliss	Hoeven	Rubio
Coats	Isakson	Scott
Coburn	Johanns	Sessions
Cochran	Johnson (WI)	Shelby
Collins	Kirk	Thune
Corker	Lee	Toomey
Cornyn	Manchin	Vitter
Crapo	McCain	Wicker
Cruz	McConnell	

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON BURNS NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on the Burns nomination.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, are we on the second nomination in this stack of nominations?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that all time be yielded back on this stack of nominations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.