

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

MS. STABENOW. Mr. President, first I have to say that clearly there are two Americas on how we view health care, that is for sure, after hearing my colleague speak about the “disaster” of providing tens of millions of people health insurance, affordable health insurance.

Where I live in Michigan, it is great that families no longer have to put the kids to bed and then say a little prayer: Dear God, don’t let the kids get sick. For millions of Americans, the Supreme Court decision has reaffirmed the fact that they will have that peace of mind.

When Chief Justice Roberts, writing for the majority today, said “Congress passed the Affordable Care Act to improve health insurance markets, not destroy them,” I think he was absolutely right. I commend him and the majority—substantial majority—for understanding that in the competitive, private marketplace that we set up through insurance exchanges, we meant for all Americans to have the opportunity for the tax cuts that allow them to be able to purchase insurance, most people purchasing insurance for under \$100 a month, which, contrary to destroying America, I think is making incredible differences in people’s lives and creating the opportunity going forward for a competitive marketplace for small business.

Certainly now, I hope from here that we will go forward and stop all of the repeal discussions and get down to the business of improving health care because I think there are still things we need to do. We need to look at how things are working and make sure things are going as well as possible, particularly with small businesses, and I feel we have some work to do. But it would be nice if we could get beyond the unfortunate commentary that has gone on for too long that somehow providing affordable health insurance for Americans is going to be the end of our country.

I certainly think that on something like health care, where nobody controls whether they get sick or mom and dad get sick or the kids get sick or their friends get sick—we are in a situation where our job is to figure out the best way to support people taking responsibility to purchase insurance and make sure that it is affordable, high quality, and low cost. And that is something which we—in the greatest country in the world, with all of the innovators, all of the smart people we have, the wonderful doctors, the wonderful hospital facilities we have, certainly we can do that.

That is, in fact, what is happening through health reform. Right now, 16.4 million Americans who were without insurance before the Affordable Care Act now have the confidence and security of knowing they have health care coverage. Now, 6.4 million Americans, because of the Supreme Court decision,

will be able to keep the tax credit. They are not going to see their taxes go up. They are going to be able to keep the tax credits that are going to allow them to make sure that insurance is affordable. That includes over 228,000 people in my home State of Michigan. That is a lot of people.

What is also so incredibly important is that of those people who already have insurance—the majority of Americans—they are having better opportunities to keep it, not be blocked, not be dropped, not have caps.

Some 129 million Americans have preexisting conditions, whether it is diabetes, juvenile diabetes, cancer. Colleagues here have been in situations of announcing various kinds of cancer, diseases, and so on. Some 129 million Americans—including 17 million children—no longer have a risk of being denied coverage because of the insurance company being able to stop them if they have a preexisting condition.

“BEAT THE PRESS” SOFTBALL GAME

I was with a wonderful group of women from Congress—if I can just divert from that serious moment to say that last night we raised money for breast cancer survivors in a wonderful game between the press and the women Members of Congress. Despite both teams doing a great job—I was very impressed with both sides, but the great news is that the Congresswomen won. We called it “beat the press.” It was great. But what was most important last night was seeing all the breast cancer survivors who were there, women who had been able to get that checkup, been able to get that treatment, knowing that going forward, wherever they work—if they move from one job to another, if they change insurance, they are still going to be able to get the coverage they need. They are going to be able to get that mammogram with no copay as preventive health care. They are going to be able to get the care they need. If they need treatment, they are not going to arbitrarily have an insurance company come in and say “We don’t really care what your doctor says about how many sessions you need or radiation treatments. You get 10 and that is it” or “You get 5 and that is it” or whatever the number is.

MR. PRESIDENT. 129 million Americans with preexisting conditions today can breathe a sigh of relief because they are going to be able to continue to have the health insurance they need. Some 105 million Americans no longer have a lifetime cap on coverage, including mental health and substance abuse coverage, which is so very significant, and 76 million Americans with private coverage are eligible for expanded preventive services, such as mammograms and prostate screening.

We all wish our wonderful friend and colleague Senator KING all the best as he gets his treatments next week. We know he will come back strong, as well as all of our colleagues who have been in similar situations.

This is a big deal. This really is about saving lives. That is what this is all about. It is not a political game. It is not just going back and forth between Republicans and Democrats. This is health. This is medical care. If you get that horrible diagnosis—you are sitting in a doctor’s office, and you are told you have cancer or a heart condition or any number of other things—you are going to be able to get medical care.

We also know that consumers have saved \$9 billion since 2011 because the law requires insurance companies to spend at least 80 cents on every dollar we give them on medical care. That was not always the case. You can get a rebate if they don’t.

So I hope that at this moment in time, we will stop the efforts to repeal health reform. I know it is in the budget that passed. The Republican budget—House and Senate—sets up a process to be able to go back and one more time try to repeal health insurance for tens of millions of Americans. I hope we will not do that. I hope the other side will not do that. We certainly will not do that. I hope that, instead, we will get about the business of making sure it works as well as possible and that we are strengthening the quality measures, the opportunities for competition, and continuing to bring rates down.

We know that if health reform is repealed, it will increase deficits by hundreds of billions of dollars and cause 19 million Americans to lose their health insurance just next year, according to the budget office—19 million people—and 24 million people in the next few years. The Congressional Budget Office says that a repeal would result in a \$353 billion increase in the budget.

I congratulate the Supreme Court for common sense today and for understanding what we meant, what legislative intent was all about, and urge that we now decide we are going to work together on health care moving forward.

HIGHWAY BILL

MS. STABENOW. Mr. President, I have one more topic I would like to speak about today, and that is the fact that we have a looming deadline. In 36 days, the highway trust fund is going to be at zero—empty. In 36 days as of today, if we do not act together, there will be a shutdown of the highway trust fund, which will have a ripple effect through the entire economy and harm businesses and workers and families in every single one of our States coast to coast. The harm will be felt equally—Republicans, Democrats, Independents, people who don’t participate in the political process, people who do. Everybody will suffer if we cannot come together and address the highway trust fund. If this happens, Congress fails in its responsibility.

With all due respect, I have to say that it falls right on the majority because we have been saying and will

continue to say that we want to work together on a bipartisan basis to get this done.

There was a time when it was not a partisan issue, when Republicans were leaders on building our infrastructure. In fact, President Eisenhower said in 1952: “A network of modern roads is as necessary to our national defense as it is to our national economy and our personal safety.”

What is interesting is that tomorrow is the day when it is 59 years—tomorrow, 59 years ago, Congress approved the Federal Highway Act, connecting all of our country for commerce, for farmers, for families. The rollcall, interestingly, was almost unanimous. Only one Senator voted no. Everybody else voted yes. Ninety-nine voted yes. Then it passed in the House on a voice vote.

Think about all the discussions we are having today. The Federal Highway Act passed on a voice vote in the House. Only one person in the Senate voted no. It was signed by President Eisenhower 3 days later. It was the biggest public works project in our Nation’s history. It could not have happened if not for a triumph of bipartisanship. A Republican President working with a Democratic Congress got this done.

When we look at who benefited from taking that dirt road, paving it, and being able to go across our country, it certainly was colleagues in the West, colleagues in the South. It wasn’t just the cities. In fact, they probably had roads already. It was everybody else, as we moved across the country. So this should not be regional. It should not be partisan. It doesn’t make any sense for us not to come together and get this done.

Behind the teamwork at the time, after they worked together to pass this, construction began on a system of 40,000 miles of highways, enough to circle the globe 1½ times. That is what was done when people worked together to build the strong infrastructure of the 20th century.

It didn’t take long before the economic impact was felt. By the late 1950s, our interstate highways were responsible for 31 percent of the annual growth of the economy. Over 30 percent of the growth in the economy came from that one act, developing the infrastructure to move goods and services and people across our country.

The people of this country were getting to their destinations faster, more safely than ever before. Every rural community was flourishing just as our urban communities had been.

Thanks to President Eisenhower’s leadership and a Democratic-controlled Congress, our roads in the mid-21st century were the envy of the world. Other nations noticed. Those nations aspired to be like us, to be like America in a global economy.

They now are making huge investments in their infrastructure, from China, at 9 percent of their GDP—four times more than we are—to Brazil.

I have said before that when I was in China a couple of years ago, they rolled out 20 new international airports—20 international airports. That didn’t count anything else they were doing.

In Brazil they rolled out for us—when I was there with the Secretary of Agriculture—their new rail system and road system that was going to get agricultural commodities to the ports and move people around their country so they could move forward as a global, economic power.

Today our European competitors spend twice as much as we do, and now it is time for America to step forward because, unfortunately, we are now playing catchup. The World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report for 2014 and 2015 ranks America 16th in the world in the quality of our roads. America is one spot behind Luxembourg and just one spot ahead of Croatia, as I said before. Yay, we are beating Croatia. It is an embarrassment, and it is not what our people need or our businesses need or what our farmers need or what our workers need.

In 2002, that same report had us at No. 5—the fifth best transportation system. Now we are 16th, and the American Society of Civil Engineers has given America a D. And how many of us would be satisfied if our children came home from school with a D? I know I wouldn’t be.

It also said that 32 percent of America’s major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. We know what has happened when bridges have fallen. We know what happens. I have seen it in Michigan and heard the stories of people driving under overpasses and cement falls down on the car. People’s lives are threatened. People’s lives have been taken.

Driving on bad roads costs motorists \$109 billion in road repairs a year. I talked to one colleague who told me that he had to replace all four tires on his car when he went through one pothole not long ago, and that in the last year he had bought seven new tires for his car, which is way more than he would have been paying if we had created a way to fund our roads on a long-term basis that made sense.

It is not right for Congress to neglect our responsibility to maintain and, in fact, strengthen our infrastructure. In fact, we, as individuals and business people driving on roads, driving across bridges, and moving across our country, are paying for the fact that we have not come together with a long-term plan. We cannot expect our workers and companies to compete in the 21st century global marketplace if we are forced to use 20th century roads and bridges.

So I would say, in conclusion, that we have 36 days left to act. Now, when we want to, we can act pretty quickly.

I commend colleagues from the EPW Committee who have come forward with a 6-year bill. We have in front of us a policy passed by the committee.

I congratulate Senator INHOFE and Senator BOXER for coming forward

with a proposal that will increase the funding over time, and I believe and hope we will do it in an even more robust way. They put forth policies that will, in the long term, create the economic stability for our businesses and the jobs for our workers and our families that they need. The DRIVE Act, as we call it, is an important step forward. I commend the chairman of the Finance Committee for holding hearings on how we finance that, because that is our responsibility.

I say, again, we have enough time to get this done because President Eisenhower, over 50 years ago tomorrow, with a Democratic Congress, got it done. Thirty-six days is enough time for us to meet the expectations of the American people on this issue.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I have been interested in how the Democrats are constantly pushing to get moneys for the Federal highway system. All of us are. Every one of us in this body wants to do everything we can for the highway system. However, they are talking in such big terms that the only way you could possibly reach those kinds of moneys would be with further tax increases.

Now, my experience here is that when our friends on the other side call for tax increases, it is so they can spend. Frankly, I would tell you, if we raised the amount of money they are asking for in tax increases, I could tell you all of the projects that are going to be done, and many of them are not the crucial projects in this country.

All I can say is that we are going to try to find the moneys, but we don’t want to raise taxes, and we certainly don’t want to raise the gas tax at this time. We will find enough moneys to do, hopefully, a multiyear approach toward the highway plan. I am dedicated to try to find that way.

The other committee, the Environment and Public Works Committee, is, I believe, the committee that has passed a bill calling for a 6-year highway program. I hope that it would meet my highest goal, if we could do that, but I don’t think we would be able to do that under the current monetary and economic systems that we have today.

But, nevertheless, I am going to do my best to try to help to get the highway bill through and to do it the right way.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator HATCH be recognized following my remarks.

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

TRIBUTE TO ALAN LEVIN

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, today I wish to honor someone I have had the