

sides of the aisle have significant concerns with these amendments, and the President has promised he would veto this bill if these amendments were not stripped from it.

My colleagues' insistence that we accept these House amendments is jeopardizing timely enactment of a vital and bipartisan Homeland Security funding bill and threatens to prolong the crippling budget uncertainty the Department of Homeland Security has been operating under since last year.

On top of that, according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, this House bill with the amendments would increase deficits over the next 10 years by a total of \$7.5 billion. Instead of helping our Nation move forward with our economic recovery and our deficit reduction, this bill would move us backwards.

I understand why some of our colleagues are upset about the President's immigration policies. We can and we should have a debate about those concerns. We started the process just yesterday in the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, where I serve as ranking member.

Let me remind my colleagues that we wouldn't even be here having this conversation today or at that hearing yesterday if Congress had finished the job we began some 2 years ago in the Senate, right here on this floor. As most of my colleagues in this Chamber will recall, two-thirds of the Senate came together in 2013. We passed by a wide margin a comprehensive immigration reform bill. Was it perfect? No, but we took significant steps to fix our badly broken and outdated immigration system and to enhance the security of our borders.

At the same time, the bill would have reduced our budget deficit by nearly \$1 trillion—\$1 trillion—over the next 20 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office. Let me repeat that. Comprehensive immigration reform adopted here by a two-thirds vote would reduce our deficit by nearly \$1 trillion over the next 20 years. We demonstrated almost 2 years ago that we can debate our Nation's immigration policies in a thoughtful way in the Senate, and, I think, over in the House. There is no reason why we can't do it again. We need to have this debate on the Senate floor as we did last Congress.

We need to have this debate in committees as we did in the last Congress. We need to have this debate in our towns and States across America as we did in the last Congress. But we should not have this debate while we are deciding the fate of the budget of the Nation's most critical national security agency, the Department of Homeland Security.

I am not the only one who thinks so. All three former Department of Homeland Security Secretaries—Republicans Tom Ridge and Michael Chertoff and Democrat Janet Napolitano—wrote to the Republican leadership last week and this is what they said:

We do not question your desire to have a larger debate about the Nation's immigration laws. However, we cannot emphasize enough that the DHS's responsibilities are much broader than its responsibility to oversee the federal immigration agencies and to protect our borders. . . . And funding for the entire agency should not be put in jeopardy by the debate about immigration.

The Washington Post's editorial board has also weighed in. Last week, here is what they wrote:

If congressional Republicans want to attack those—

Talking about immigration—actions responsibly, with discrete legislation, they are free to try. . . . However, it is another thing to wield their frustration over immigration as a cudgel, holding hostage an entire department of government that is critical to the nation's security. That is as irresponsible as it is politically ill-advised.

I could not agree more. We need to focus now on doing the job we were sent here to do—to provide the funding necessary to keep America safe in an ever more dangerous world. Once we have done that, we should engage in an urgent debate on how to amend America's immigration policies for the 21st century.

If we choose instead to continue down this irresponsible path toward a shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security, we will actually put America at greater risk. Why would we do that? Why would we do that?

If we allow the Department of Homeland Security to shut down, here is what is going to happen—a few things that will happen. First of all, over 50,000 TSA security screeners keeping terrorists off of airplanes are going to go without pay. We want them to do their jobs, but we are just not going to pay them for it. Over 40,000 Customs and Border Protection officers needed to keep our borders secure are going to go without pay, too. We want them to do their jobs. We are not going to pay them, either.

In addition, over 13,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, enforcing our immigration laws and combatting human and drug trafficking, are going to go without pay too. We want them to do their jobs. We are not going to pay them, either. Essentially, a large part of our Federal homeland security personnel would be working on an IOU. Now you say: How is that fair? How is that fair? Well, it is not. Even if we avoid a shutdown but continue to keep the Department on a continuing resolution, we prevent the men and women who work there from doing their jobs as effectively and as efficiently as they can.

For example, we will not be able to replace obsolete surveillance technology along the high-risk areas of our border with Mexico. Our Nation will have significantly fewer resources to respond to any future surges of unaccompanied minors along the Southwest border. Morale will continue to degrade at the Department, which already ranks dead last for morale among other major Federal agencies. This is not

how we want to be treated. It is no way for us to treat the men and women who are working around the clock to keep us safe.

It is also an egregious waste of money. As we have learned over the years, crisis budgeting costs taxpayers millions of dollars. This latest situation is no exception. Employee hiring and research efforts at the Department would come to a halt. The contracts for a variety of security projects would be stalled and would need to be renegotiated, in all likelihood at a higher cost to taxpayers.

For example, a continuing resolution would delay a \$600 million contract to build a national security cutter that the Coast Guard urgently needs—keep it from being awarded. This cutter is critical to stopping the illegal trafficking off of our shores and ports of entry, including illegal immigration and drug and human trafficking. That is just one example.

As any business owner would tell us, this is not the way to run a business. It is certainly no way to run a vital national security agency of the United States.

So how are we going to remedy this situation? Fortunately, we have a solution sitting right in front of us, the bill that Senators MIKULSKI and SHAHEEN have introduced. It is S. 272. It is a clean fiscal year 2015 appropriations bill, which both Democrats and Republicans agreed to just this past December, 2 months ago. This measure provides the stable full-year funding that the Department of Homeland Security and our national security need without demanding a ransom.

In closing, I want to urge, as strongly as I can, my colleagues in this Chamber, in this body, to join me in doing the right thing. Support passage of this clean full-year appropriations legislation for the Department of Homeland Security. Reject the amendments approved by the House. Once we have done that, let's begin a fulsome and badly needed debate that will enable us to hammer out a thoughtful, 21st century immigration policy for America, a policy that is fair, a policy that will significantly reduce our Nation's budget deficit, and a policy that will strengthen the economic recovery in this country that is now underway.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, the Affordable Care Act is working. It is working better, frankly, than many of us who were there at its inception believed it would at this early stage in its implementation. The numbers are pretty hard to argue with. You have got now upwards of 10 million people who are on either private insurance with tax credits to help them get that coverage, or are on Medicaid through different State plans.

That is a big deal, because in just about 1 year, we have reduced the number of people without insurance by 25 percent in this country. In my State of Connecticut, which probably has the best-run exchange in the country, we have actually reduced the number of people without insurance by 50 percent.

Better news is the quality is getting better. Some of the measurements we most closely watch to decide whether people are getting better care—things such as hospital-acquired infections and readmission rates after surgery—are going down. That is really good news. Of course, maybe the best news of all is the taxpayers are saving money, an extraordinary leveling off of health care inflation.

Health care spending never goes down from year to year. We used to have 7-percent to 8-percent increases in spending on an annual basis. We are now seeing 2-percent or 3-percent increases. In fact, the lowest rate of increase since we started tracking health care spending happened in this last year. Federal taxpayers are saving, on average, \$1,000 per Medicare beneficiary compared to what the Congressional Budget Office thought we would be spending when we passed the Affordable Care Act.

That does not mean we do not have a lot of work to do. But it does mean the conversation we should be having today is about perfecting the Affordable Care Act, making it work even better, not repealing the Affordable Care Act.

It is not just me. I have been down to the floor over and over again to make this case, that the numbers simply do not lie. The press, universally, perhaps, reporting on this overwhelming avalanche of data, tells us that the Affordable Care Act is working. I literally in the 5 minutes before I came to the floor did a quick search to see what people were saying. New York magazine: "Four new studies. ObamaCare is working incredibly well."

Forbes: "More solid proof that ObamaCare is working."

Washington Post: "Despite the critics, ObamaCare works."

Business Insider: "Major new study says ObamaCare is working."

Rolling Stone: "ObamaCare: It's working."

I could do a full 10 minutes just on the headlines that tell you the Affordable Care Act is working. But instead of talking about making it work better, today we are talking again about repealing it. The House took, I think, their 56th vote to repeal all or part of the bill. This morning several of our colleagues unveiled a proposal to replace the Affordable Care Act.

Now I give my colleagues credit. It has been 5 years. This is the first time we have seen even a memo on what would be this replacement we have been hearing a lot about. But it is still a memo, as far as I can tell. We do not have any legislative text or any CBO score. But I wanted to come to the

floor and talk for a minute about what this replacement would mean.

The replacement memo we looked at this morning, offered by two of our Senate colleagues and one of our House colleagues, all really thoughtful legislators on this issue—I want to give them credit for putting this on the table. It would really mean the retraction of health care coverage for millions of Americans. People who have finally been able to afford health care because of the Affordable Care Act now would go back onto the rolls of the uninsured.

Why? Well, for two major reasons. Their plan reduces the number of people who would be eligible for the subsidies by millions, and then greatly reduces the amount of the subsidy. They admit that is the best way to get coverage, so we are not arguing any longer, at least, over whether providing tax credits in order for people to buy private insurance is the right way to go about expanding coverage. They want to lessen the amount of money we are providing in tax credits, meaning a lot less people are going to get insured. So you would have millions and millions of people who would go back onto the rolls of the uninsured, people who would once again be at the mercy of insurance companies, would lose everything, their house, their savings, their car, just because their kid got sick.

But the second thing it does is really puts insurance companies back in charge of our health care. It gets rid of the prohibition on gender rating, which is a complicated way of saying that in the old system, insurance companies charged women more just because they were women. The Affordable Care Act does not allow that any longer. But that is what we would go back to under this alternative. It used to be that insurance companies would say: You are only going to get a certain amount of insurance per year and then we cut you off. Well, for a family I know in Simsbury, CT, whose son has a fairly rare blood disorder, that meant they had to pull out of their savings every year in order to afford his expensive drugs. That discriminatory treatment would come back.

While the bill tries to address the issue of preexisting conditions, it seems to say that you would have a one-time chance to get on an affordable care policy if you had a preexisting condition. But if you did not sign up in that opening moment, in that special offer, then you would not be able to sign up later on. So if you got sick later on, it would be too late for you, or if you lost your coverage at any point, like, on average, 89 million Americans have over the last 3 years, you would not get the chance to have insurance with a preexisting condition at the same rate as people without preexisting conditions.

What this bill is about is people paying more and getting less. It is about going back to the day when people could not afford health care and they

lost everything simply because they or a loved one, a spouse or a child, got sick. Never mind the fact that some of the pieces I thought we all agreed on are repealed in this proposal. The doughnut hole is an outrage, the idea that seniors who are trying to buy prescription drugs on Medicare get a little bit of coverage, then no coverage, then a lot of coverage. Middle-income seniors cannot afford that gap in coverage.

Well, the Affordable Care Act effectively eliminates the doughnut hole. That has saved seniors \$11 billion since 2010. This memo we have seen from the Republican side would apparently get rid of those savings, putting the doughnut hole back, putting millions of seniors back on the hook for all of these costs when they lose coverage. This effort to replace the Affordable Care Act is a giant step backwards for millions of American families.

Here is the conversation we should be having: We should be talking about how to make this law work even better. It is a major concession, frankly, from the Republicans that tax credits are the appropriate way to get people more insurance. It is a concession that we should be at least addressing the issue of discrimination against sick people. But the protection they are offering is minimal, and the expense that would be passed on to seniors, families, hard-working Americans is immense.

So I am looking forward to seeing this introduced as a piece of legislation. I am looking forward to seeing the CBO score on it. Clearly the American people do not want us to have this debate over repeal any longer. They are sick and tired of it. They want us to be talking about creating jobs, protecting this country, making college more affordable, and making small, meaningful changes to the Affordable Care Act to make it work even better.

The data does not lie. The numbers do not lie. The increasing stories of people all across this country who are benefitting from the Affordable Care Act do not lie. The Affordable Care Act is working. We should stop having this tired debate over repealing it and replacing it with something that is much lesser coverage for much more cost and invest in a conversation about how to make sure the good news continues about the Affordable Care Act working for millions of Americans.

I yield the floor.

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I am disappointed that earlier today once