

“Some rates in Georgia insurance exchange could soar in 2017”—and by “soar,” they are talking about as high as 65 percent.

As one paper put it, there is “no end in sight for higher Obamacare premiums.”

These are not just abstract numbers; they can represent real pain for families already stretched to the limits under the ObamaCare economy. A recent survey showed that health care costs are now the top financial concern facing American families, ahead of concerns about low wages and even job loss. And what does the Democratic response too often seem to boil down to? They say: Just get over it. Get over it.

Just the other day, the Democratic leader in the Senate said that Americans who, like us, disagree with the pain ObamaCare is causing need to just “get over it and accept the fact that ObamaCare is here to stay.” That is hardly the only callous comment we have heard from across the aisle on ObamaCare.

I would ask Democratic colleagues to listen to the Americans who continue to share heartbreaking ObamaCare stories with us, like these Kentuckians:

Should the Elizabethtown man who says he can't afford to see a doctor under his ObamaCare plan, despite the fact that he pays more for his premium than his house payment, just get over it?

Should the dad from Owensboro who said he has seen his family's health costs increase by nearly 250 percent under ObamaCare just get over it? “What happened to being rewarded for working hard in America?” this dad asked. “What happened to the American dream?” Many Americans are wondering the same thing.

ObamaCare continues to write a record of broken promises at the expense of the American people. Instead of lowering premiums by up to \$2,500 for a typical family, as then-Senator Obama talked about on the campaign trail, ObamaCare has raised many families' rates. Instead of making health care costs more affordable for all, ObamaCare has led to unaffordable out-of-pocket costs for families all across our country.

The bottom line is this: ObamaCare is too often hurting those it proposed to help. It is a direct attack on the middle class.

The Republican-led Senate sent a bill to President Obama's desk to repeal this partisan law so we can replace it with policies that actually put the American people first because, let's remember, the American people do not need to get over ObamaCare's failures. Our Democratic colleagues need to finally join us in working to end those failures.

TRIBUTE TO RUBY PAONE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, when Ruby Paone started her first day on the job in 1975, she was fresh out of

college. Today, she has served here longer than any current Senator, save one—the senior Senator from Vermont.

Ruby Paone, our Senate doorkeeper, has seen a lot in her 41 years in the Senate. She has watched legends, such as Baker and Mansfield, in action. She has acquired a lot of unique titles, such as card desk assistant and reception room attendant.

We are really going to miss her when she retires later this month. I think Ruby is looking forward to kicking back in Myrtle Beach after more than four decades of Senate service. More importantly, I think she is anxious to spend some time with her family, away from work. Her son Tommy works at the Senate appointments desk. Her daughter Stephanie works in the Democratic Cloakroom. Her husband Marty used to as well. The two of them even met right here in the Senate.

We are glad that Ruby will get to spend more quality time—that is, non-Senate time—with her family. And we are sure she would like to see a little more of her son Alexander as well.

As Ruby knows, she will be leaving a family behind here too. She has served as surrogate mom of sorts to many doorkeepers, pages, and interns. They have looked up to her for wisdom and for advice. And it is no wonder. She has a lifetime of stories and experiences to share in a retirement that is richly deserved.

We will miss Ruby Paone, but we wish her the very best, and above all, we thank her for her many years of service.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

OBAMACARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is really unfortunate that the Republican leader comes here often and continues to harp and complain about ObamaCare, even though it is continuing to work. More than 9 out of 10 Americans now have health care. This is the best it has ever been. It has never been this way before.

They say they want to repeal ObamaCare. They have tried scores of times. It hasn't worked. So I guess what they are saying is that they just want to get rid of this, and have people go back to the way it used to be. I remember and people in America remember canceling insurance if they were sick. If they had a real serious illness, they would cancel because their bills were too high. If they had a preexisting disability, forget about it—they couldn't get insurance. If they were a college student, they were cut off quickly; they couldn't stay on their family's insurance policy. Many men and women can stay on the insurance of their parents.

So we would be much better off with ObamaCare and with helping the Amer-

ican people if, rather than complain, as they have for 6 or 7 years, they worked with us to try to improve the bill. We know it can be improved, but we can't do it alone.

So that is how unfortunate this argument has been. We need everything ObamaCare does. We don't have anything better. And we are not going to do anything to help the poor. That is a strange way to conduct business, but that is the way it has been in the filibuster-laden Republican Party since Obama was elected.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION AND DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS BILLS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, over the next few weeks, the Senate will be voting on both the Defense authorization and Defense appropriations bills, these two very important pieces of legislation. We need to take the time to understand them and, of course, to read these bills and make sure we are doing the right thing. Just reading the Defense authorization bill is not going to be an hour-long deal. It is not going to be done watching a ball game or watching television programs. Why? It is a very big piece of legislation. This is it. Try reading that between innings—1,664 pages.

Chairman McCAIN may have read this. He may understand every line in it. He would have a better chance than most of us because he is the one who conducted the hearings behind closed doors—secret sessions. Few outside the committee probably know what is in this monstrous bill, this big bill.

Even though the chairman came here on Monday and started complaining about this legislation, if you want to get an idea how the bill was hastily put together, consider this. The bill was put together behind closed doors. At 5 p.m. last night, Senator McCAIN's committee voted on the classified annex to the Defense authorization bill. He had been ranting and raving about Democrats holding up this bill. That is what the Republican leader did here today. He didn't rant and rave, but he did say we are holding it up. But the committee hadn't finished its work as of last night. The bill wasn't done. They just finished it last night at 5 p.m. Unfortunately, it appears that this massive bill is everything Senator McCAIN has in the past complained about. He says he hated what has gone on in the past.

This bill is loaded with special projects—loaded with them—sprinkled with special favors and many different flavors. It has extraneous provisions, and who knows what else. If there were ever anything that could be identified as an earmark or two or three or four or a few hundred, it is in this bill. I thought Senator McCAIN didn't like that. I can understand why some would want to rush this bill through the Senate without a lot of public scrutiny, but we are not going to do that. This legislation is far too important.

I started reading a book last night called “Red Platoon.” It is a brand-new book written by a man who won a Medal of Honor. It talks about a remote outpost in Afghanistan. We know what sacrifices the Red Platoon and the men and women who fought in the new wars in Iraq and Afghanistan made. So we know they deserve better than just rushing through this bill. Hard-working American taxpayers deserve better.

The one thing we can all agree on is that Americans must have a strong, strong military with the capability to defend America’s national security interests around the world and to protect us here at home. There is no dispute about that.

Democrats believe that we must take care of our middle class also. We must know that the security of all Americans depends not only on the Pentagon—on bombs and bullets—but also on other national security interests—the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the help that comes through this legislation to local police departments and first responders. That is why we fought so hard as Democrats last year to stop the devastating cuts from sequestration, which was generated by the Republicans and which would have been a disaster for the military, our national security, and millions of middle-class Americans.

We need a bipartisan budget agreement. We reached that, and it is commendable that the Republican leader said we want to stick with that. Well, we need to stick with it because that bipartisan budget agreement was based on the principle that we need to treat the middle class as fairly as the Pentagon. That agreement was intended to avoid another budget fight this year, but it doesn’t appear that is possible.

I was pleased that my Republican friends stuck to this budget agreement in the committee with both authorization and appropriations. But we have been told—and told publicly—that they intend to break the bipartisan budget agreement and propose \$18 billion increases only for the Pentagon. This money is going to come from a strange source. It is going to come from the military itself.

I had the good fortune of meeting with the Secretary of Defense last Thursday. To use the so-called OCO moneys—they are used for warfighting, and that is why they are put in there—to take this and use it for some other source or some other purpose is wrong.

My friend talks about how the military supports this legislation. Of course they do. But they don’t support what Chairman McCAIN is going to try to do. In the process, we need only to look at what else is going on with the Republican Senate. They refuse to provide money to fight the Zika virus, to stop the terrible situation regarding opioid drugs. The people of Flint, MI, are still waiting for help. We need funding for local law enforcement, which

has not been forthcoming, and for the intelligence agencies and our first responders. It is wrong not to take care of these folks.

We reached an agreement last year. Now both sides need to keep our promises and the agreement for the American people. We must treat the middle class fairly. Make no mistake, as the appropriations process moves forward, we are going to insist on that.

I will support cloture on the motion to proceed to the Defense authorization bill today, even though in 2010 my friend, the chairman of the committee, voted with other Republicans to stop moving forward on the Defense bill. But Democrats are willing to proceed deliberately. We are going to hold Republicans to their word on the budget agreement. We are going to do our jobs, as we want them to do theirs. Our Armed Forces and middle-class Americans deserve nothing less.

TRIBUTE TO RUBY PAONE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, my friend the Republican leader talked about Ruby Paone. I have so much admiration and respect for her that it is hard to put it into words.

In 1975, a young woman from North Carolina came to the U.S. Capitol. She was overwhelmed by everything, especially overwhelmed by this huge building she was going to work in. Ruby was excited for her first day of work at the Senate reception desk. But as she approached the Capitol, realizing what her new job was all about and the new city, she recalls: “Walking into this building, I was overwhelmed.”

It is understandable that she felt that way. Many of us have and do feel the same way. The Capitol was a big change for Ruby. She was raised in the small town of Bladenboro, NC. She was a farm girl who spent her summers pulling peanuts—I didn’t know you pulled peanuts, but that is what they do—and harvesting tobacco. Ruby graduated from a small Presbyterian school, St. Andrews University. She is the only one in her family to leave their small town in North Carolina. But as Ruby got situated in her new job that day, another feeling set in. She said: “It just felt right to be here.”

Now, 41 years, 2 months, and 9 days after she walked through the Capitol doors to start a new job, she is leaving. It is hard to imagine her not being here. To borrow from her own words, “it just feels right” to have Ruby here.

Tomorrow is going to be her last day in the Senate. After more than four decades of service to the greatest deliberative body, Ruby is retiring to spend more time with her family. Her family’s gain is our loss. She is an institution, a fixture in the Senate. She is the longest serving woman who works with the doorkeepers. She has been here for 7 different Presidential administrations, 10 consecutive inaugurations, 16 different Sergeants at Arms, and 383 different Senators.

She recognizes every one of those 383 Senators, and there is a reason that she does that. When she was first hired, we didn’t have the names and faces in these books we give to the pages and to new Senators. It wasn’t done that way then. She had to do it by memorizing their names and learning to recognize them when they came into the Capitol Rotunda and on the Senate floor. She would walk around and look for these Senators to get to know who they were. She grew close to many of these Senators, including Blanche Lincoln, TOM CARPER, and THAD COCHRAN.

I know Ruby. I know her family quite well. Her husband worked on the Senate floor for many years. He was instrumental to Majority Leader George Mitchell, Tom Daschle, and me. No one knows the rules of the Senate better than Marty Paone. He now works for President Obama in the Office of Legislative Affairs. He is a very special person, and I have such admiration for him.

When their children were in high school, we would often talk about their children—how they played ball, how they did well, how they didn’t do so well the night before. That is what our conversations were about. We didn’t talk a lot of Senate business, unless we had to. I am sorry to say that we had to many times. Marty helped me so many times through very difficult situations on the floor.

To say that I will miss Ruby is an understatement. I want be able to come to Ruby and say: How is Marty? How is he doing?

Throughout my entire time in the Senate, she has always been here with a smile and a kind word. She is as much a part of this place as anyone who has ever served in the Senate. So I, along with the entire Senate—Senators, staff—wish her the best as she embarks on her well-deserved retirement.

Ruby, thank you very much for your 41 years, 2 months, and 9 days of service.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL OF A RULE SUBMITTED BY THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S.J. Res. 28, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 28) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Secretary of Agriculture relating to inspection of fish of the order Siluriformes.