

(The remarks of Mrs. FISCHER pertaining to the introduction of S. 3213 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mrs. FISCHER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

ZIKA VIRUS FUNDING AND OBAMACARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, 2 weeks ago, I came to the floor to talk about the threat that is posed to all of us by the Zika virus. Since then, more than 3,500 Americans have contracted this terrible virus. Unborn babies are being put at risk for a serious medical condition called microcephaly, which is a condition—I will tell you this as a doctor—where babies are born with smaller heads and brain development problems, and adults can be paralyzed and even killed by this virus.

Here we are getting ready to vote in the next 15 minutes on an appropriations bill that is supposed to do something about this virus—the Zika virus.

How are the Democrats responding? They are peddling myths and playing politics. That is what they do. They already blocked this legislation once, and now they are ready to block it again. It is unbelievable.

This legislation includes \$1.1 billion to fight Zika. The head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said it would fund all of the agency's immediate needs in the fight against Zika at this point.

When the Senate voted on this in May, every Democrat in the body voted to support the exact same amount of money. Two months ago, Democrats thought this was the right answer, but now they are willing to let the American people suffer because of this virus. What happened? What changed in the last 2 months that would have the Democrats who voted for it now vote against it? Nothing has changed except that the situation has actually gotten worse and more dangerous for people. I think the Democrats were never serious about wanting to do anything at all. Democrats decided they would rather have a political issue than have a real solution. Democrats aren't going to be able to dodge responsibility this time. We are running out of time to prevent an epidemic.

Last week, Senator BILL NELSON from Florida said: We are at the 11th hour and 59th minute. That is exactly right. Why, then, is Senator NELSON and his Democratic colleagues playing a game of chicken with the American people?

There was a poll that came out last week by the Kaiser Family Foundation

which found that 76 percent of Americans support the Zika legislation that we have on the floor. Democrats ought to start listening to the American people. They should stop playing political games and take the money they asked for and that the Centers for Disease Control says is the right amount of money to fight the spread of this threat to the health of the American people.

This is not the first time that Democrats in this body have put their own political talking points ahead of the American people in terms of their health care. At the beginning of this year, Republicans passed legislation to repeal the President's health care law. Why? So we can replace it with health care reforms that work for the American people. We want to act, and we acted to protect the American people from a health care law that has harmed so many people across the country and that so many people feel has absolutely punished them. President Obama vetoed the legislation, and Democrats in Congress resisted every attempt to undo years of damage caused by ObamaCare.

Republicans offer solutions. Democrats just want to try to preserve the President's legacy, no matter what. Democrats are totally ignoring all of the chaos and all of the harm that is being caused by this health care law.

Taxpayers paid to set up 23 different insurance co-ops across the country, and 16 of them have now folded. Only a third of the original co-ops are still operating. Billions of dollars in taxpayer money have been wasted, never to be paid back, and more than 850,000 Americans have lost their insurance that they got through the co-ops because the insurance co-ops can't afford to stay in business under the health care law.

The co-op in Illinois collapsed just this week. That is the President's home State. Last week, it was co-ops in Oregon and Connecticut. Yet the Senator from Connecticut comes to the floor and says the health care law is working. It is not, even in his home State. There are more than 20,000 people in Oregon who have been left scrambling to find new coverage starting July 31—just a couple of weeks from now.

It is not just people who belong to the co-ops who are losing their insurance. The largest insurance company in Minnesota says they are going to stop selling insurance in their State at the end of the year. BlueCross BlueShield of Minnesota covers over 100,000 people. All of them are going to lose their insurance and have to find coverage elsewhere.

President Obama said: If you like your insurance, you can keep your insurance. Not for the people in Oregon, not for the people in Illinois, not for the people in Connecticut, and not for the people in Minnesota.

Americans who don't lose their insurance are going to have to get ready to

pay a lot more for it next year, even if they can keep what they have. They sure don't like it. More companies have been saying how much they plan to charge next year, and the numbers are staggering. In Montana, BlueCross BlueShield just announced on Friday that it is raising ObamaCare rates 62 percent. Who can afford that? It is incredible. And the President has the nerve to call it the Affordable Care Act and to tell Members of the Senate that they should forcefully defend and be proud of it. There is very little to be proud of. It is happening all across the country because of this law. Premiums are skyrocketing. So are deductibles. So are copays. Every other cost that people pay out of pocket for their health care is going up—all of this since ObamaCare went into effect, and it is because of ObamaCare.

I read a story the other day that said that before ObamaCare, for every doctor, there were six administrators out there trying to administer health care in the country in terms of doing the paperwork, pushing the paper around. Now it is nine for every one doctor. So we have gone from six to nine administrators for every doctor practicing medicine.

People across the country are rejecting what President Obama is continuing to claim is working well.

Just before the Fourth of July, we learned that 1.6 million people who signed up this year for ObamaCare have already quit by the end of March. They signed up at the beginning of the year and quit by the end of March—1.6 million.

The Congressional Budget Office said that they were expecting by this time over 21 million people to have signed up for ObamaCare. Well, with more and more dropouts, we are at only half that number, and it is just more evidence that the President's health care law is cratering, it is collapsing.

There is so much bad news out of this ObamaCare information that we continue to have that the White House feels they can't hide it any longer, so they dribble it out over the Fourth of July weekend—right before the Fourth of July, when people are paying attention to other things—because they don't want the world to know how badly this is actually working. Yet, what the President says is "forcefully defend and be proud."

The President is ignoring the fact that 1.6 million people who already listened to him this year and signed up have already gotten out of it because it is a bad deal. He totally ignores the 850,000 Americans who have lost their insurance because of his failed co-ops. Instead, he actually wrote an article in the Journal of the American Medical Association patting himself on the back, congratulating himself—it came out this Monday—on how great he thinks this health care law is. It is delusional for him to think that. It is ignoring the reality of what the American people see. He is living in a cocoon

of self-delusion. That is what we are seeing across the country—the President ignoring the facts.

In the article, the President actually says that the health care law should be expanded—expanded, he said—by offering government-run health insurance plans. If President Obama and the Democrats in Congress think America needs more government control, more control over people's health care, they are really out of touch with reality.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I wonder if the Senator will yield for a question.

Mr. BARRASSO. Most certainly.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, the Senator makes an excellent point about the tremendous cost increases that American taxpayers and American medical consumers have experienced, as well as the number of insurers that are just leaving the scheme altogether. So Americans really are not any better off.

I appreciate the Senator coming to the floor time and again with the facts about this issue, but in particular I want to go back to a point the Senator made with regard to what we are going to vote on in a few minutes. Do I understand from my friend from Wyoming that we will soon be voting on—at the top of the hour, we will be voting on a proposal that funds the Zika disease at an amount that the CDC says is necessary and at an amount that our friends on the Democratic side have argued for and voted for time and again? Do I understand that to be correct?

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, the distinguished Senator from Mississippi understands correctly, because at this point, the request, and what the Democrats voted for earlier this year—\$1.1 billion, which is what the Centers for Disease Control says is the correct amount—the Democrats are now seeming to vote against it. They voted against it earlier this week.

Mr. WICKER. This very bill we will be voting on funds Zika at that amount?

Mr. BARRASSO. At the amount requested by the Centers for Disease Control.

Mr. WICKER. I was disappointed to hear the Senator say that he believes the Democrats will come in and once again block this funding this afternoon. If that happens, when will be the next opportunity that this body will have to vote on this vital funding?

Mr. BARRASSO. I think we are talking about at least 7 weeks from now. If the Democrats don't change their tune, there is a lot of damage that is going to occur over that period of time.

Now is the time to kill the mosquitoes because remember, as my colleague from Mississippi knows, it is the mosquitoes that carry the virus—the virus that, if a person is bitten and gets that virus, can cause all of these very consequential health impacts to

babies who are yet to be born, as well as to adults.

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I would just observe—and there may be others who wish to speak in the very short time we have—I would just observe that we have a bill before us that gives the administration what they have been requesting, that gives our friends on the Democratic side of the aisle what they have asked for time and time again, saying that the Senate should act. We have an opportunity to do that today and to leave here with a victory for health care and a victory for the American people. Yet, if we do not act—and it appears we will not because Democrats will come in and object and not get the 60 votes—then it is going to be a month and a half to 2 months before we can provide the funding for this vital disease-prevention legislation.

So I would just say that I would call on my colleagues, here at the eleventh hour, to reconsider their position. Let's go out for the conventions on a positive note and give the American people the funding the experts in our government tell us is necessary.

I yield the floor to the Senator from Wyoming and thank him for yielding the time.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I appreciate so much the comments by the Senator from Mississippi, who is absolutely right. There are two components of this. One is to kill the mosquitoes now. The other thing we need to move ahead with is coming up with a vaccine that can help prevent this virus from taking hold if someone happens to be bitten by a mosquito. So we need to do two things: We need the research and we need to kill the mosquitoes now.

It was astonishing that one of the Democrats was opposed to the fact that what we wanted to do was make it easier to spray the mosquitoes because we have to spray near water. Well, that is where mosquitoes tend to multiply; it is where they breed; it is where the Zika virus is born. But they were so concerned that there would be a regulation that for a short period of time would be laid aside. We would still have to use only the things that have been properly approved for spraying near water. It seems as though the Democrats were willing to line up by the mosquitoes instead of the people being bitten by the mosquitoes. This is how ludicrous this has gotten.

The money requested by the CDC—the right amount of money—is here on the floor to be voted on today. We have to get the research going. We have to spray and kill the mosquitoes. But, once again, it seems the Democrats would rather have a political reason than a solution.

I would recommend that the Democrats, coming out of their lunch meeting they are having now with their nominee for President, Hillary Clinton—they are not here in the floor defending themselves; they are out there

visiting with Hillary Clinton. They need to come to the floor of the Senate and vote to approve this legislation today, to get the money to the Centers for Disease Control, to do the research, to kill the mosquitoes.

Republicans are here offering solutions. Democrats are offering gridlock and the same old political games.

Thank you, Madam President.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BARRASSO. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I move to proceed to the motion to reconsider the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the conference report to accompany H.R. 2577.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Hearing no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I move to reconsider the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the conference report to accompany H.R. 2577.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Hearing no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the conference report to accompany H.R. 2577, an act making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, John Thune, Orrin G. Hatch, Jerry Moran, Shelley Moore Capito, Johnny Isakson, Mike Crapo, Thom Tillis, John Hoeven, Joni Ernst, Steve Daines, Chuck Grassley, James E. Risch, John Boozman, Cory Gardner, John Barrasso.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the conference report to accompany H.R. 2577, an act making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close, upon reconsideration?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.