

veterans. Most of them wore their bodies out to give their families a better life. There is no more fitting action that we can take during this holiday season than to honor this promise that the American Government has made to our Nation's mine workers since Harry Truman made that promise. The workers held up their end of the bargain. It is despicable that we are not holding up ours and that we are preparing to leave town without lifting a finger to help these workers.

United Mine Workers of America's health care and pension plan covers some 100,000 mine workers; 6,800 live in Ohio. If Congress fails to act, thousands of retired miners could lose their health care this year. I emphasize that it is retirement security they worked for, security they fought for, and security they sacrificed raises and their own health for.

Understand this: Too many people that dress in suits, work here, draw good salaries, and draw good benefits don't understand what happens at the bargaining table for workers in our country. They often give up raises today to defer that money so that they have retirements and pensions in the future.

Say that again: People at the bargaining table give up dollars today. Rather than take a little higher pay today, they are willing to defer that so they will have better pensions and health care. This Congress, this Senate leadership is blocking us from doing that.

These are workers who worked for decades in the mines—hard, back-breaking work but work that had dignity. I live in a place that some national media people, including President-Elect Trump, have referred to as the “rust belt.” When they say “rust belt,” that is a direct attack on the dignity of work. It demeans their work. It diminishes who they are. It is saying that those people, such as miners, steelworkers, and others who make things, are in the past.

For these mine workers, every year in their work in the mines, they have earned and contributed to a health plan and pension plan. I have met with some of these workers—Ohioans like Norm Skinner, Dave Dilly, and Babe Erdos. I have heard their stories. They knew they were signing up for tough, dangerous work. They worked in the mines, after all. They knew that. But they also know their work had dignity. That work was part of a covenant we used to have in this country—a covenant that said: If you work hard, if you put in the hours, if you contribute to retirement, if you provide for your own health care in the future, you will be able to support yourself and your family. It is what built our country. It is what created the middle class.

Today, the value of that work is eroding. Too often, too many major corporations in this country are choosing profits over people. We haven't lifted a finger, frankly. The political agen-

da here—some people who run this Senate simply don't have respect for the mine workers, for the union. They seem to have some anti-union sensibilities about this. Whatever it is, they are not lifting a finger to help these workers who put in the effort and who are in trouble through no fault of their own.

There is no reason to leave town. We shouldn't be going home for the holidays without taking care of the 6,800 mine workers in Ohio, a number of mine workers in West Virginia, thousands of mine workers in Virginia, Eastern Kentucky, and Southwest Pennsylvania.

This is a bipartisan solution. It will not cost taxpayers a dime. If this bipartisan mine workers legislation were brought to the floor today, it would pass with majorities in each party. We shouldn't be taking up other legislation. Until we do this, it should be part of the Cures Act that we will be voting on later.

The Cures Act has important components to it, good steps on mental health, on hospital reimbursement. It has my National Pediatric Research Network Act in it. But it is a 900-page bill negotiated entirely in the House. It has major flaws.

It does include funding for NIH, funds to fight the opioid epidemic. We know how important that is. But the funding isn't mandatory. It will be subject to the whims of future Congresses. This is pretty good happy talk, and we are saying the right things. We are putting language in this bill, but it doesn't guarantee the money will be there. It is so important to my State.

A new report released this week showed Ohio had the most drug overdoses that resulted in death in the country in 2014, not the most per capita. We had more drug overdose deaths than California, three times our population; Texas, twice our population; more than Illinois, Pennsylvania, New York, Florida—all States with more people than we have. More Ohioans died from drug overdoses from OxyContin or oxycodone or heroin or the new synthetic drugs we are seeing more and more. We have to do more.

The billion dollars in grants in this bill are critically important, but it needs to be mandatory funding. It can't be that down the road some powerful Member of the House or Senate stands in the way of actually getting these communities the money. We can't fight year after year to get these dollars appropriated.

The Cures Act gives significant concessions to Big Pharma, which is the big drug industry, the drug giants in this country, but it does absolutely nothing to combat drug prices. We give concessions to the big drug companies, but we do nothing to fight the high cost of drugs in this bill.

We shouldn't be spending time on this flawed bill until we keep our promises to the 12,000 mine workers I mentioned. These miners worked in some of the most dangerous conditions of any

jobs in this country. They deserve the full pension and health benefits they were promised. They have worked a lifetime to earn these benefits. They kept faith with us. We must keep faith with them. It is simply irresponsible and immoral for us to leave town and not take care of the mine workers.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BARRASSO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### USE OF MILITARY FORCE AUTHORIZATION

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, I had not intended to speak today. I was presiding in the chair, but I simply want to take one minute to associate myself with the comments of the Senator from Virginia, Mr. KAINE, who just spoke about our war against ISIS.

I think two points he said are worth underscoring for us in this body:

No. 1, we are obviously at war with ISIS. We should acknowledge that we are at war with ISIS.

No. 2, why is it important that we do this? It is important for the troops who are at war for us to acknowledge the reality of the fact that we are at war. It is important for their families. It is important for debate and deliberation in this body and in the country more broadly. And, frankly, it is important for the future of this body to honor a constitutional intent that distinguishes between Article I, the legislature, and Article II, the Executive.

In the American system, in Madison and the other Founders' genius, they recognized that many foreign wars have not made sense in human history because Executives get wrapped up in war without broader deliberation about the consequences of their actions.

To be clear, we should absolutely be at war with ISIS, and we are at war with ISIS. But in the American constitutional system, it is the obligation of the 535 of us who serve in the Congress—and particularly the 100 who serve in the Senate—to represent our people and to have this debate before the people about the fact that we are at war with ISIS.

Then, the Commander in Chief, as Chief Executive, should prosecute that war in a way that the American people know has the sanction and the validation of both branches and of all the people across 50 States.

This is not the action of one President acting unilaterally. It is a bad precedent to set for us to continue to drift and to remain at war now 15 years post the authorization that was against the perpetrators of the 9/11 attack, now using that old authorization to conduct

a war, now on a second continent—now in Africa as well—but without any current discussion or authorization.

The use of military force is something that should be deliberated about in this body. I again want to associate myself with the comments of the Senator from Virginia that, given that we are at war with ISIS, we should formally be declaring war against ISIS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from Wyoming.

#### OBAMACARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, Democrats in Washington continue to try to understand the results of the election. I have heard them blame Republicans, I have heard them blame the FBI, and I have even heard them blame the press. What I have not heard is a single Washington Democrat admit that one reason Democrats lost on November 8 could be their disastrous health care law. Well, the health care law has definitely been on the minds of the voters.

On October 31, just 1 week before election day, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel had an article with the headline, "Rates for Obamacare Plans Jump in Wisconsin." This article said that tens of thousands of middle-class people in Wisconsin who don't qualify for Washington subsidies "will pay the full cost of double-digit premium increases."

The article quoted one insurance broker, saying:

I've talked with people who are exasperated. They are just at wit's end.

That is what the insurance broker said.

It is not just the price increases. In at least five States, there is only one company selling plans on the ObamaCare exchange. My State of Wyoming is one of those. People are being told their plan will no longer include their doctor or maybe even a hospital near where they live. The average deductible for a silver plan next year is going to be almost \$3,600. There is damage that ObamaCare is doing to American families right now. People are seeing it.

That article was in a Wisconsin newspaper, a State in which, apparently—according to the polls—Donald Trump was running behind, RON JOHNSON was running behind, but both of them carried the State handily. Here we have an election where people expressed their opinion, and the Democrats seem to want to deny the main reason for it.

The American people have placed their faith now in Republicans, and we, in turn, earned that trust. We will do it through both Executive action and legislative action with regard to the health care law. First, President Trump will have a great opportunity to start making things better for the American people by changing some of the regulations that are a huge part of the health care law.

Remember, this health care law is 2,700 pages long, and within those 2,700 pages there are more than 1,800 places where the law gives the Secretary of Health and Human Services the power to write different rules and different regulations and different requirements to try to spell out what the 2,700-page law says. The Obama administration absolutely abused that power. The administration added more than 40,000 pages—40,000 pages of regulations and of redtape that were never actually in the law itself.

In the Trump administration, there is going to be a new Secretary of Health and Human Services. He is a physician—an orthopedic surgeon. Once confirmed, I believe he will be able to interpret, reinterpret, and then reapply the law in ways that actually help American families instead of so many ways that hurt American families because the interpretation in the past favored Big Government over people.

This includes applying the law to make it easier for businesses to provide insurance to people who work for them. It means giving power back to the States to come up with ideas that work for all of the citizens. The nominated Secretary of Health and Human Services is not just a doctor, but he also served in the State legislature, and he knows that at the State level you can make much better decisions for the people of that State than when Washington comes up with a one-size-fits-all decision.

Republicans want to make sure the power goes back to where it belongs—with the people, the families, and the States. That is where it belongs. The Executive action can start pretty quickly, and it can be abridged to the important work that the Congress is going to have to do. We are going to work hard in the Senate and in the House to undo some of the damage—significant amounts of the damage—that ObamaCare has caused. It is undoing the damage because people all around this country have suffered under this health care law. It means repealing the health care law and wiping the slate clean.

ObamaCare can't be fixed by tinkering with it here and there—not with another attempted bailout of the insurance companies, which the President has continued to promote. This solution isn't to add more government on top of what we already have.

The health care law began collapsing a long time ago, and Republicans are now ready to clear away the rubble. Then, we will write a new law with a multiple step-by-step process—a law that reforms America's broken health care insurance system so patients can get the care they need from a doctor they choose at lower costs—one that puts American families in control of their health care and a law that is simpler, fairer, more effective, and more accountable.

We have seen the mistakes that the Democrats have made with the health

care law. We have seen that every State is different. So we are going to be looking to push as much authority out of Washington and back to the States. We have seen that too many mandates and regulations drive up costs, and they drive up the costs without improving the quality of care. We have seen that when Washington writes bad laws, the unintended consequences are severe.

These are all things that Republicans have said since the very beginning. The failure of ObamaCare has proven that the Republicans were right. The election has proven that the American people want a new approach. American families don't want us to tinker with ObamaCare. They just want affordable health care.

I want to make a couple of things clear. First of all, nobody is talking about taking people off of insurance without a replacement plan in place. We all understand that there needs to be a transition over time. People have already been hurt too much when they lost their insurance, when their rates went up because of ObamaCare, and with the mandates and the government saying they know better than families across the country.

We will be working to make the transition as smooth as possible for everyone. That is why we are including a transition period in a repeal bill that Congress passed last year and sent to the President's desk. The President, of course, vetoed it. Our goal is to do no harm.

As we write a new health care law, we will be looking to make it real reform that is actually centered on patients. We can increase the use of health savings accounts. That will give more people the chance to control how they spend their own money on their health care. We can support innovative insurance plans that pay for prescription drugs that work best for patients and not just the ones preferred by insurance companies. We will be talking about ways to protect people with pre-existing conditions and letting young people stay on their parents' insurance. These are important parts of the health care law.

Republicans are going to consider any ideas—any ideas that can help us to give people what they wanted all along—access to the care they need from a doctor they choose at lower cost.

Democrats promised that they would listen to other people's ideas, and then they went behind a closed door in an office back there and they wrote the law, ignoring all of the suggestions by Republicans and without any Republican support at all.

We are not going to make that mistake. We will be looking for Democrats' help. We will be looking for Democrats to work with. We will be listening to Democrats' ideas, and we will be working very hard to win Democratic votes for any new law.

Reforming health care in this country is not going to be easy. It is not