

their wages. They will get tired of their job over time, but the damage they will do if you let them have a desk will be far greater than what we get out of them for the paycheck we are giving them. I say purge as many as possible, Mr. President. Put those people in place who are loyal to you, who want to carry out your agenda.

Here is another news report. The Washington Post reports that U.S. investigators examined Jeff Sessions' contacts with Russian officials while he was a campaign adviser to Trump. This report from The Washington Post says that U.S. investigators examined Jeff Sessions' contacts with Russia. So he was under surveillance. He was at least under investigation, it sounds like, if this story is right. Here we have a seated United States Senator, a stellar individual.

If I were going to try to compare the character that I know Jeff Sessions is, and I look around this town, I ask: Who matches the character of Jeff Sessions?

Not many. I would say Vice President PENCE, and then the list gets pretty short after that. Jeff Sessions has a very high degree of character, and he is imminently a constitutionalist, an adherent to the rule of law, a dedicated patriot, and one who makes his decisions within the bounds of the Constitution, of the law, of the rules that exist. He is a great respecter of the order of a civilized society and a terrific Attorney General.

There was no better choice that could have been reached by Donald Trump than Jeff Sessions. But here he is, subject to this kind of—at least a report that there is an investigation, Mr. Speaker. I think if I wanted to know about Jeff Sessions' activities, if I thought that it was my business, I would just ask him. When he answered the question from Senator FRANKEN, the question was in the context of did you have any discussions with Russians with regard to any campaign activities that you might have cooperated or colluded with?

If AL FRANKEN had asked that question precisely, then the answer would have been precise as well.

I can understand why Jeff Sessions' answer came back no, that he hadn't dealt with the Russians. I do a lot of meetings, and if I am asked a question about the context of a subject matter, I will answer within the context of that subject matter. I think that is what Jeff Sessions did. Most of the Senators—I will say all of the Senators sitting there on that committee who heard those questions asked and saw the answers of Jeff Sessions, and then they and their staff and the public, weeks went by, not a peep about anybody being concerned about the answer that Jeff Sessions gave.

Why?

Because all of those Senators sitting on that committee listening to his testimony and the other Senators who were watching that testimony either from in the room or around the Hill on

C-SPAN, and their staff who were monitoring those hearings all understood that you have people from multiple countries come into your office on an irregular basis, and in a matter of months one might meet with the Greeks, the Russians, the French, the Germans, pick your country in South America or Asia. There is a constant flow of people coming through my office, and I know there is a constant flow of people from other countries coming through the offices of probably every United States Senator.

So when Jeff Sessions said that he hadn't met with the Russians within the context of discussing the campaign, which was the heart of the question asked by Senator FRANKEN, no Senator was concerned about his answer that he hadn't met with the Russians because they understood the context within which he was answering that question. Had that not been the case, some Senator, like CHUCK SCHUMER, would have woken up the first day instead of after they were able to gin it up and turn it into a media story, Mr. Speaker.

We have a country to save. We have an ObamaCare to repeal. We have a healthcare policy in this country that needs to be rebuilt logically by preserving our doctor-patient relationship, encouraging competition between insurance companies, letting people be in charge of the policy they want to buy, providing full deductibility, fixing the lawsuit abuse, being able to sell insurance across State lines and expand health savings accounts. All that needs to happen. I am hopeful that it can happen within the next couple of months, Mr. Speaker.

While that is going on, we need to look over at the White House and encourage this President: Purge those people from your midst who owe their loyalty to Barack Obama. They are undermining your Presidency. You have to fight the moles from within, the media from without, the George Soros-organized protesters who are on the streets of America every weekend with a different cause. They will continue this until the public gets tired of it.

Mr. Speaker, the President needs to understand that he has a lot of enemies in this country and a great big job. His ability to take on the mainstream media has been demonstrated. Now it is a little bigger hurdle that needs to happen, too. The intelligence community from within, there are a lot of good, dedicated patriots there. They need to purge those people from their midst as well who are not loyal to the United States of America and those who are working against the foreign policy agenda of this President.

We need to rebuild America. We need to make America great again. We need to restore our economy. We need to get our tax cuts done. We need to get some more regulatory reform. Let's have this robust, growing economy kicked off and see that 3, 3½, 4 percent growth that this country can do with the free-

dom that has been delivered to it, much of it by the pen of our new President, Donald Trump.

I am optimistic about our future, although we have our challenges in front of us, Mr. Speaker, and I urge that my colleagues step up to this task, keep it constitutional, keep it free market. Remember the individual freedom, the God-given liberty, and the legacy that we are leaving for succeeding generations. Let's get this job done and make America great again.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

CONCERN OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BACON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 17 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, thank you for your courtesies.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of topics that I choose to debate this evening, but before I do that, I would like to first raise a very important concern. I will soon draft a letter that my colleagues will join in signing to the President of the United States on the extensive crisis of starvation in Somalia and South Sudan.

Just recently, we met with leadership—with my colleague KAREN BASS and a number of other colleagues—of South Sudan speaking about the extensive starvation in sub-Saharan Africa.

I am looking forward to a response from this White House upon receipt of the letter that they will engage with the world community on providing immediate food aid and other resources to the people of sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Somalia and South Sudan.

It is something that I am well aware of because my colleague, the late Mickey Leland, Congressman from the 18th Congressional District in 1989, and years before that as the co-chair of the Select Committee on Hunger, was very concerned about starvation in that very same area because of the drought and terrible climatic conditions, huge loss of life. Congressman Leland was constantly responding with his own personal sacrifice of taking food over to that area as well as seeking to encourage others in the world family, United Nations to do so. In 1989, he, in actuality, lost his life in a plane crash in Ethiopia delivering resources to those individuals caught in a terrible condition, a valley, a desert-like atmosphere attempting to save their lives or to bring grain in. I know full well that his spirit reigns as he might have been engaged in this if he were alive in 2017 to see this terrible disaster occurring right in front of us.

We need the United States to be very active in the world community. The U.N. Secretary-General has now pronounced this to be a horrific disaster needing the attention of world leaders and the world community. I want to

put that on the record because I want to offer to the people of Somalia and South Sudan my deepest sympathy. There are other issues in South Sudan that we must address, but we also need to be concerned in the area of food starvation, loss of lives of hundreds of thousands of women and children who are now suffering, and it needs to be addressed.

□ 2130

But I really came to the floor in the backdrop of the introduction of a document that is represented to be an answer to the need of Americans for health care. Certainly the document is one that is being proposed by those who believe that there is a need.

I might offer to say that there may be a need to improve some aspects of existing coverage, which has worked so well under the Affordable Care Act. And, yes, to those opponents of the Affordable Care Act, I would be pleased to debate you that, in fact, it has worked well.

It has worked well because 30 million Americans have insurance. It has worked well because 150 million Americans have guaranteed health benefits. It has worked well because low-income Americans have access if they are able to come under the expanded Medicare to health care. It has worked well because of young people being on the insurance of their families to the age of 26. That was first on the Affordable Care Act. It has worked well because we can provide for the preexisting condition, for you to be able to have insurance. We can provide for no caps on your insurance, and also payments to hospitals for uncompensated care. We can provide for that because of the mandate and the tax subsidies that go to the people to allow them to secure the insurance that they would desire.

There are certainly ways that we look to improve, and it would be nice if we had bipartisan cooperation to do that. But now we have a document that it is important for the American people to know that the question of how many people will lose coverage has not been answered. How many people will be covered has not been answered by this new document that pretends to respond to the healthcare needs of Americans. There is no documentation as to what the quality of the coverage will be. And to those listening who are concerned about the financial fiscal responsibility of this country and this Congress, no one knows the cost of this insurance.

So I would make the argument that we have a real problem and that there is a document that is supposed to be marked up as a healthcare bill for which the Republicans have not received any response from CBO. Let me indicate that when Democrats were seeking to work with Republicans in 2009, we had a CBO estimate before our markup began. Certainly, a request was made by Republicans about the bill; and, interestingly enough, they asked about coverage, and they asked about quality and cost.

We know that it is almost certain that Americans will lose coverage under this new document. We also know that jobs will be lost. We also know that in my State of Texas, very much is dependent or concerned, if you will, with rural hospitals, that rural hospitals will suffer greatly by the loss if it happens—and we hope not—of the Affordable Care Act, because rural hospitals and the rural communities throughout Texas will be devastated.

We also know that, with the mandate going away, the tax subsidies will be going not to people where they should be so that you can provide for your insurance as we understand it—this document is still a mystery—but it will be going to insurance companies. And we also know that, if you are 50 and older, it will cost some five times more than if you are younger. A heavy burden on working Americans, with no explanation. We know that the cost is going up and that you may be paying an amount that continues to go up every month.

Let me be very clear. We are trying to get the answers, but it makes for a very difficult process of getting the answers for a bill that has just been released in the last 24 hours, and, in actuality, no one knows really what is in it, and it will then go to committee to be marked up.

In my State of Texas, almost 2 million—1,874,000—individuals in the State who have gained coverage since the Affordable Care Act was implemented would lose their coverage if the Affordable Care Act is entirely or partially repealed.

Mr. Speaker, 1,092,650 individuals stand to lose their coverage if we dismantle the exchanges which allow people to access insurance companies all over the Nation.

Mr. Speaker, 913,177 individuals in the State of Texas who received financial assistance to purchase health insurance in 2016 and received an average of \$271 per person would risk having coverage become unaffordable because they would not get that money anymore. That money would go to insurance companies.

Let me also say that 1,107,000 individuals in the State could have insurance if the State of Texas additionally would have accepted the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion. I can tell you that States like Kentucky understand the full impact of the Medicaid expansion, and they do not want to see it go away.

Mr. Speaker, 508,000 children have regained coverage since the ACA has been implemented, and they will lose their insurance.

Mr. Speaker, 205,000 young adults, as I have indicated, in the State would be able to stay on their parents' insurance. We don't know if that is clear because we really don't know the funding structure of this new document that has now been thrown to the American people.

We know that 646,415 individuals in the State who received cost share re-

ductions to lower out-of-pocket costs, such as deductibles, copays, and coinsurance, are now simply at risk. We are all at risk. We are all, frankly, at risk. So I would have to ask the question: What does this plan really do to help America?

We know that 10,278,005 individuals in the State of Texas who now have private health insurance that covers preventative services without copays, coinsurance, or deductibles may lose these benefits if the Affordable Care Act goes. Women in the State who can now purchase insurance for the same price as men, eliminating the disparities that occurred before 2009 and 2010, may be at risk again for having to pay more money for their insurance—the actual disparity in health care being totally eliminated—and insurance companies being able to charge women more than their male counterparts.

Roughly, 4 million individuals in the State with preexisting diseases may, in fact, not have that because what is the basis of the financial structure that can pay to ensure that those with preexisting diseases in this new document called health care, whether there will be any money to cover those individuals with preexisting diseases, we don't even know that. I think that is something important to note.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, because this is a mysterious bill, we know that it will mostly benefit the rich. Households at the top of the U.S. income ladder would see taxes on their wages and investments drop under this bill. No one has anything against our friends that are doing quite well, but it will be on the backs of working Americans.

The Republican plan to replace ObamaCare includes a tax break for insurance company executives making over half a million dollars a year. What a great gift. We are about to approach Easter, a time of sacrifice, and Passover, and isn't it interesting that what we would be facing is a gift in this tax season of a great tax break of our friends making over \$500,000 a year. Meanwhile, working Americans would lose coverage and be forced to pay more for less.

According to CNN, most healthcare experts agree that millions of Americans are likely to lose their coverage under this new document that is to reflect health care. Mothers: likely to make maternity coverage, among other services, immensely expensive, if available at all.

In fact, I recall certainly as a young mother that one of the most frightening things is to not have insurance or the kind of complete coverage that one needs with expectancy of the birth of a child. Not knowing what may happen to the mother during birth, what challenges the new baby may face, and to face the uncertainty of not having full maternity coverage is devastating.

Seniors, pregnant women, and children on Medicaid, under the Medicaid expansion, which has been adopted in 31 States and Washington, D.C., more

than half of the 50 States would shut down at the end of 2019. So you would get a few more years, and then hard-working Americans would be thrown off into the street in 31 States, including Washington, D.C. Women, seniors, children, in particular pregnant women, would see their health care thrown to the wind, extinguished, burned up.

The bill also proposes a major overhaul of Medicaid, a Federal State program covering more than 70 million low-income and disabled Americans. I believe that the proposal is to block grant Medicaid dollars under the pretense of letting States be creative.

I want Americans and my colleagues to understand what creativity means. Creativity simply means that they will do everything they can to shorten and cheapen the health benefits that you will get. And it will be made through deals, how little money can we spend, whether we can use the Medicaid block grant dollars for some other things, a wish list that we may want in the State that we come from, the 31 States, plus Washington, D.C.

Instead of the current open-ended Federal entitlement, States would get capped payment block grants based on the number of Medicaid enrollees. Block grants, basically. And when it runs out, you are in a whole world of trouble. Or, as we say, you are up the river without a paddle—you are up the river without a paddle. No one comes to your rescue when you are up the river without a paddle.

Seniors who have worked so hard who are on Medicare will have fiscal problems themselves. It will exacerbate the fiscal problems of Medicare by hastening the exhaustion of the program's trust fund by 4 years. Our commitment is to ensure that the Medicare trust fund clearly is strong, solid, and solvent. Whenever I meet with my seniors, I tell them my commitment—strong, solid, and solvent. But with this document called health care, we are in jeopardy.

So it is clearly a problem, and it certainly is not gathering support in unanimity on the other side. Mr. Speaker, someone is complaining about it. It happens to be Republicans, so it looks like it is going to be a rough road.

But my concluding remark, Mr. Speaker, is that this document that represents itself as a healthcare answer has so many problems, so many people will suffer, so much loss, that I ask my colleagues to reject this legislation as it is presently constructed, and I look forward to working to better health care for all Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 2145

TOPICS OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the

gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) until 10 p.m.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I was handed a letter by a lady when I was at one of the many events that I attended in my district. It is how I stay in touch with what is going on. This lady says: "U.S. Congressman LOUIE GOHMERT: I am a 52-year-old widow. ObamaCare is a major financial problem for me. Someone needs to fix the healthcare system. One-third of the money I get from my deceased husband's retirement fund is given to health care. My deductible alone is \$7,000."

She has an exclamation point.

"I am angry with the government deciding how I should spend what little money I have. I had to get a part-time job just to put gas in my car. So I clean tables and I mop floors. I am physically unable to work full time. I am frustrated with the fact I had to move back in with my parents just to make ends meet. Would you like that? Fulfilling. Could or would you do something to relieve this burden?"

That is from a 52-year-old widow in my district. That is what we have done with the burden, ObamaCare. We here in Congress decided: You know what? We are going to tell people like this widow how she has to spend what little money she has left. We are going to force this woman to go clean tables and mop floors when she is physically unable to work full time because we here in Washington have decided we know better than she does. So we have every right in Congress to force people like this dear widow to get on her hands and knees to work for the United States Congress. Pay your taxes and now, that is not enough. We are going to tell you that you are being forced to spend your money on health care that will never help you a dime because you have a \$7,000 deductible.

Or how about hearing, 2 weeks ago, from a friend, one of those who was cut because of financial troubles. They had 100 employees. They can't afford the ObamaCare, so they have cut their 100 to 70, and they are continuing to work to get down to 49. Why? Because of ObamaCare. So we have already had 30 breadwinners, men and women, lose their jobs because of one thing: ObamaCare.

And now there are going to be 21 more who lose their jobs because of one thing: ObamaCare. They have got to get it under 50 so they don't have to keep paying such ridiculous prices for health insurance that has such high deductibles nobody will ever benefit.

Who is benefiting? Well, it can't be all of the health insurance companies because they have dropped out. They can't make money. So it has to be the government that is making all the money from this ObamaCare program.

A single mom told me she had been working at McDonald's making ends meet, but because of ObamaCare, they cut her hours back. Now she has to work at both McDonald's and Burger King, and she was in tears because it is just too much.

And why is she having to do it? Because people right here in this House and the other body, without one Republican vote in this body, told America: Too bad. You are not working enough at McDonald's. We want to make your life miserable. We are going to make you work at two places part time just like this widow that we condemned to start scrubbing tables and floors because the Democrats in this body, without a single Republican vote, decided we know better what you need to do with your time and your money than you do.

So it is a problem of arrogance when Washington thinks it knows so much better than people across the country. And yes, I know, I represent the 26 percent that didn't vote for me. I understand that. And I have heard from them, and I don't need a townhall to know they are for keeping this albatross of a healthcare system. The ACA is not affordable, though. It is ridiculous to call it affordable care.

One of the problems is, when you have to take precious healthcare dollars that used to go to providing care in a hospital, in a clinic, for a patient, now it goes to government navigators. Why? Because there were union officials that decided: We have lost too many union members. The unions that are growing are the government unions, the very ones that Franklin Roosevelt said you should never have a union composed of government workers.

Think about it. You are working for the people of the United States of America. Why would you need a union to organize against the people? Sounds un-American. But those are the ones that are growing. And union leaders, without concern for their members, decided: Let's embrace as many aliens as we can get into the country, legally or otherwise, because they will join the union and that will grow our ranks; and we as union leaders will be better off, but our members' wages will continue to go down, our members will continue to lose jobs. But, gee, we may have more people in our union.

We know that there was supposed to be thousands of new IRS agents hired so that they could help enforce ObamaCare. It is a travesty. The bill that has been filed is not going to do it, but, hopefully, our Republican leadership will be willing to work things out and not prevent good amendments that will make it palatable so enough of us can vote for it.

I have gotten to know President Trump a bit, and I feel like he wants the best deal he can get for America. If this bill were the best he could get, he would probably have to live with that, but we can do a whole lot better. Some of us are determined we are not going to vote for one that doesn't.

In the meantime, there is so much talk by President Obama and all of his minions that are still out there trying to undermine the Trump administration. We have a crisis here in Congress