

THANKING SHARON LOLLIO

(Mr. BISHOP of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an inspirational constituent and friend in my district, Sharon Lollo. Sharon is working tirelessly to plan a Michigan Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Monument in our capital city of Lansing.

This is important because Michigan remains one of the last States to have a law enforcement memorial, and Sharon is making it her mission to see that this important project does not fall by the wayside by raising awareness to the issue of violence against law enforcement and the importance of honoring the fallen through a permanent memorial in Michigan's Eighth District.

Once constructed, the memorial will be a place of quiet refuge for Michigan residents to reflect on the ultimate sacrifice made by the men and women who keep us safe.

We have lost many Michigan officers in the line of duty over the last few years, and we owe it to them, their families and friends, and the entire law enforcement community to honor them with this special tribute.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Sharon Lollo for her hard work raising the funds and awareness for the Michigan Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Monument. I thank Sharon for her enduring commitment to our men and women in blue and their loved ones.

I am grateful to all those who put their lives on the line to protect our community.

HONORING CARRIE MEEK

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the inspiring work of former Congresswoman Carrie Meek.

Hailing from my home State of Florida, Carrie grew up in a family where giving back to the community was a top priority. Throughout her many years of dedicated work, Carrie served as special assistant to the vice president of my alma mater, Miami Dade College, where she was instrumental in the desegregation of the school.

In 1982, Carrie became the first African American elected to the floor of the senate, and my husband, Dexter, and I were proud to work alongside her on behalf of our community. Carrie and I later carried our bipartisan efforts to the marbled Halls of Congress.

As a Congresswoman, Carrie's coveted seat on the Appropriations Committee allowed her to fight for much-needed aid to south Florida after the devastating impact of Hurricane Andrew.

Following her retirement from Congress, Carrie established the Carrie

Meek Foundation, promoting programs in housing, education, health, and economic development to improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable members of our society.

At the age of 91, Carrie continues to demonstrate her affection for selfless public service. She is an example to be followed.

Congratulations to Carrie Meek.

FAMILY VALUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, it has been a most interesting day here in Washington, D.C., this last week in which we have seen the battle royal over the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. I want to really speak about the Affordable Care Act, what it has managed to do for Americans.

Much of the conversation over these last several days has been on the other side of it: how it could be repealed and how, somehow, that would be good for Americans.

But the Congressional Budget Office has made it clear that the bill that passed the House of Representatives some time ago, about a month and a half ago, was bad news for Americans. Some 18 million people would lose their health insurance in very short order within a year or so, and some 24 million would lose their health insurance over the next 5 to 7 years. That is a terrible situation.

When you take a look at what has happened in the recent period since 2014 when the Affordable Care Act was actually in full force, we have found many millions of Americans with insurance.

In my own State of California, we now have over 5 million Californians with insurance that they previously did not have. About 1.5 million of those Californians are in the exchange—the California exchange, which we call Covered California—and another 3.5 million are covered in the expanded Medicaid program. That is good news.

It is also good news that people who previously were unable to take care of their medical issues found coverage.

I remember a woman, actually, my wife's beautician, who came to her as the Affordable Care Act was implemented in California and told her: At last I can get insurance. My husband and I are going to have a baby—or we want to have a baby. We couldn't afford it before. But now I have insurance. I am on the exchange. I have the subsidy, and I can afford it—family values.

In the last 6 months, as the new administration has taken hold and as the repeal of the Affordable Care Act has become the talk of the Nation, in a more recent visit, she said: We have delayed getting pregnant because we are

not sure if I can have insurance. If they repeal, if they kill ObamaCare, I won't have insurance, and we won't have a baby.

□ 1800

Family values. I want to talk about values: family values and others.

I used this last week, and I am going to use it over and over again, because this is a statement of values. This is from Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the midst of the Great Depression.

President Roosevelt said this: "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

That is a statement of values. That is a statement of purpose. That is the reason why he and the Democrats, during the Great Depression, took the actions like, for example, Social Security. For those who have little, Social Security.

Then, again, in the sixties, for those who have little, this same statement of value came into place. During Lyndon Johnson's Presidency, the Democrats created Medicare for seniors—men and women over 65. All you needed to do to get health insurance was to live until you were 65 years of age. They also added Medicaid for the poor—principally, children and mothers.

It is a statement of values. It is a statement of purpose. It is a statement of where their heart lies and what they thought was important.

Today, we are working on the Affordable Care Act, sometimes, often derisively, called ObamaCare. But many of us proudly call it ObamaCare, where 5 million Californians have health insurance. Across this Nation, there are 20 million in all States, although some States chose not to extend the method of buying insurance on the exchanges. And so the Federal exchange exists.

This House went the opposite direction. So what did it mean? The uninsured rate in America declined down to the lowest number ever in our history, as men, women, and families were able to get health insurance.

I think of a farmer, a single woman in my district, who never had insurance, never could get health insurance, couldn't afford it until the Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare, came along. She was able to get insurance. She was able to get cancer treatment. If she didn't have insurance, she surely would have died. We have countless examples.

When I was the insurance commissioner in California, we would always fight the insurance companies over their denial of insurance. They used to call it preexisting conditions. Since the Affordable Care Act went into place in 2011 and 2012, preexisting conditions were no longer legal as a mechanism for denying insurance in the United States of America. Insurance companies could not rate people on preexisting conditions.

I remember those lists. It was two pages. As insurance commissioner, people would come to me and say: Why do

I have to fill out this form of everything I have ever done in my life? A broken leg playing football in high school had to be listed—asthma, coughs, contagious diseases. Even mundane things like: Are you a pilot; are you into dirt bikes and dirt bike racing?

These were all reasons why insurance would be denied. But with the Affordable Care Act, no more. That history was gone.

So, today, the President of the United States, perhaps proudly, stood before the American people and said: I will let it die. I will let it die. I will let the Affordable Care Act fail.

What is the message to the American public? What is the message that the President of the United States, Mr. Speaker, has said to the American public?

Mr. Speaker, he has said: I will work to deny the American people health insurance.

Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States has, in so many words, said that he will take action to deny the American people health insurance—not all of them, just 20 million. You proactively take specific actions.

And what are those actions? To tell the IRS to not enforce the mandate so that people will be able to go without insurance until they have an accident or sickness and wind up in the emergency room so that everybody else can pay for their care.

He will not allow the payment of the cross-subsidies for those insurance companies that have enrolled an excessive amount of very sick people and other insurance companies that have enrolled a healthy population. That cross-subsidy is critical.

He will create more uncertainty so that the insurance companies do not know how to price their insurance. He has already removed the ability for the Federal and State exchanges to advertise. There is no insurance company, I can tell you from my own experience, that can survive without advertising. They have got to talk about what it is they are offering. They have to sign up people, and they have to have a cross-subsidization of healthy, sick, and not so sick people in their pool of risk. But he set up a system so that those exchanges that are in existence in the States and the Federal exchanges will not have the money to advertise.

California is a big State. We can get along without President Trump. So we have set up our own mechanism of providing money for advertising Covered California. A couple of other States have been able to do the same, but not every State.

There has been discussion that the market is collapsing. I want to read to you an analysis done by the Kaiser Family Foundation that just came out a week ago that would counter the arguments that this is a collapsing market. I am going to read this. It is a little long, but I think it is worth understanding.

“Early results from 2017 suggest the individual market is stabilizing and insurers in this market are regaining profitability. Insurer financial results show no sign of a market collapse.”

Perhaps I should read that again and perhaps the President might also want to read, although I understand he doesn’t. Perhaps if he did, he would read the Kaiser Family Foundation report coming out July 2017.

“Insurer financial results show no sign of a market collapse. First quarter premium and claims data from 2017 support the notion that 2017 premium increases were necessary as a one-time market correction to adjust for a sick-er-than-expected risk pool.”

I am going to come back to that after finishing reading this.

“Although individual market enrollees appear on average to be sicker than the market pre-ACA, data on hospitalizations in this market suggest that the risk pool is stable on average and not getting progressively sicker as of early 2017. Some insurers have exited the market in recent years, but others have been successful and expanded their footprints, as would be expected in a competitive marketplace.

“While the market on average is stabilizing, there remain some areas of the country that are more fragile. In addition, policy uncertainty has the potential to destabilize the individual market generally. Mixed signals from the administration and Congress as to whether cost sharing subsidy payments will continue or whether the individual mandate will be enforced have led to some insurers to leave the market or request larger premium increases than they would otherwise. A few parts of the country may now be at risk of having no insurer on exchange, though new entrants or expanding insurers have moved in to cover most areas previously thought to be at risk of being bare.”

Not my words, but rather the words of the Kaiser Family Foundation.

So, Mr. Speaker, the President apparently intends to destroy the Affordable Care Act by saying that it doesn’t work. In fact, his actions may make it a situation in which it would not work.

I suppose if he has his way, we are going to see, in 2018, the number of uninsured rise back to where it was before the Affordable Care Act. That is about 22 million Americans without insurance.

Well done, Mr. President. Well done. If that is what you want, I want to know what your values are. What are your values?

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the President: What are your values, Mr. President? You have been supporting the Republican legislation to repeal and replace. It happens to do much for those who have much.

The largest single tax break for the wealthy ever in this Nation’s history was in the legislation that passed the House of Representatives with the repeal and replace legislation, so much

so that Mr. Trump’s Cabinet, made up of the wealthiest Cabinet perhaps ever in America’s history, would receive huge tax breaks of well over \$4 million a year, and quite possibly a much higher number.

Those are not the values of the Democratic Party, those are not the values of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and those are clearly not the values of Americans who care about each other, who are concerned about those who have little.

Ask the American public if they want to do away with Social Security. Ask the American public if they want to do away with Medicaid. Do away with Medicaid? Yes, 60 percent of the Medicaid money supports seniors in nursing homes. You want to do away with that? I don’t think so. But that is what it would do.

The Affordable Care Act does need to be improved, and the Democrats have been trying to do that for some time. How can we do it? Many ideas have been proposed.

When the legislation was heard in committees here, the Democrats proposed several amendments to improve the Affordable Care Act. The first amendment was to do away with the repeal, but, of course, that didn’t pass in committee and certainly wasn’t on the floor.

□ 1815

So how do you deal with improving the Affordable Care Act?

Let’s start with drugs. We know that for the Medicare system, that the Federal Government cannot negotiate the price of drugs. And for the exchanges—the Federal exchanges, we cannot negotiate the price of drugs. It was a law that was written with Medicare part D back in 2002 and 2003.

So why can’t we negotiate the price of drugs?

We ought to be able to do that. You want to reduce one of the cost factors, let’s negotiate the price of drugs.

How about another one? How about consumer services? Increasing the risk pool, increasing the number of men and women that are in the pool by advertising?

I talked earlier about the President removing the money for advertising on the Federal exchanges and State exchanges.

You want to improve it, improve the risk pool. A broad risk pool is a fundamental fact of any insurance program that is successful. But to take overt action, to diminish the risk pool, and to put into the risk pool less healthy people, and to keep people who are healthy out of the risk pool—please keep in mind that any of us at any particular day may find ourselves in need of very serious medical attention, perhaps a car accident, perhaps a contagious disease, Zika, who knows what it might be, or a pregnancy. So expand the risk pool by advertising, by enforcing the mandate, which is the third element that could be done.

The President has already taken action to tell the IRS not to enforce the mandate. So the young healthy invincibles shirk the law knowing that they don't ever have to pay a penalty because the IRS is not looking.

Okay, if that is what you want to do. However, if you want to improve the healthcare of America, if you want to hold premiums stable and perhaps even declining, expand that risk pool.

How about a few other things?

When the Affordable Care Act passed the House of Representatives in 2009, there was a public option in it. Unfortunately, the Senate wouldn't stand for a public option. But bring the public option back so that there would be a national public option insurance company available to everybody. Bring that back. That is another idea that ought to be the improvement of it.

Another thing: States can and have successfully modified the Medicaid programs in their State. Expand the ability of States to experiment with different ways of providing services under the Medicaid program. Not by eliminating it, as the Republicans would do—that is, eliminating the expansion, as the Republicans would do in their repeal and in TrumpCare—but, rather, allow the States to experiment with different ways of providing the medical services in the Medicaid program. And there are some great ideas out there.

We know that many of the people in Medicaid have long illnesses, high blood pressure; perhaps they have other illnesses that require constant care. We know that there are examples of programs that provide ongoing services so that these illnesses are constantly being able to be monitored and dealt with.

You want to deal with blood pressure, take a couple of cheap pills and you keep the blood pressure down and you avoid stroke and diabetes and the like. Those programs should be existing in most States, in most Medicaid programs. So we ought to provide the opportunity for the States to experiment with different ways of keeping down the cost of medical services.

There are many other things that we can do with regard to the delivery systems. California has been a leader in creating various delivery systems that do keep down the cost of care—comprehensive delivery system, preexisting conditions being taken care of. So we can do this with a variety of ways.

All of these should be on the floor of the House of Representatives and the Senate and presented to the President as we have the Affordable Care Act in place and we have ideas on how it can be improved.

Programs such as mandatory care, all of those can be taken into consideration. But, no, we are not going to do that. We are just going to let the Affordable Care Act die, so says our President.

It is unbelievable that you sign on, presumably to provide more opportunity for Americans, to provide better

medical care for Americans. But, no, that is not what is going to happen here. The President of the United States said he is going to let it die, let it collapse. How cruel, how harsh, and how unlike previous Presidents. I pray future Presidents who say: My job as President of the United States is to carry out, yeah, the preamble to the Constitution, to form a better union.

But apparently that is not the case with this President.

So the Affordable Care Act is the law of the land, and it is the responsibility of the President to carry out the laws of the land, and that includes things that he thinks may be discretionary, such as the IRS mandate, such as the advertising, the cross-subsidization for those insurance companies that have higher risk pools than other insurance companies.

We live in a very important moment where at risk are 22, 23, 24 million American lives. Thankfully, four senators stood strong and courageous and said, no, they were not going to support the repeal of the Affordable Care Act.

It is not over. This fight is going to go on for some time, and as it goes on, I would hope the American people understand what is at risk. It is the well-being of their neighbors, it is the health of their communities, and, indeed, in some cases, it may be their own life. We will see.

But today, a good thing happened—actually it was yesterday a good thing happened. The Senate was unable to pass a repeal of the Affordable Care Act and a replacement that was in every way a terrible blow to Americans. So we are thankful, and we look to the future and we look to the fight ahead.

I can tell you this: My colleagues on the Democratic side are absolutely determined that the Affordable Care Act be improved and that it continue to be the law of the land. And the millions upon millions of Americans that have had the opportunity to purchase health insurance, to be covered in health exchanges, to be covered under the expansion of the Medicaid program, we are there for them and we are going to fight this. And we will succeed because Americans know what is at risk in the legislation that passed the House of Representatives with the repeal of the Affordable Care Act and the legislation that almost passed the Senate. This isn't over. Our determination to stay the line remains.

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

POLICIES THAT ARE HARMFUL TO AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BERGMAN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CASTRO) for 30 minutes.

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Mr. Speaker, every day, millions of Americans from every corner of our Nation get up early

in the morning, leave their families, go off to work. They work hard to support themselves and their families. Many of them work two or more jobs at a time. Some come home very late, miss seeing their kids go to bed. These are folks, again, in every part of the Nation who don't ask much from their government. The only thing that they ask is that we live in a country where there is opportunity to pursue their American Dreams.

That means different things for different people. Some kids dream of growing up and being a teacher, an engineer, a lawyer, a firefighter, many things. As parents, we want to see our kids succeed, to live in a nation that remains the preeminent Nation of opportunity around the world.

Unfortunately, over the last 6 months, the policies pursued by this administration are endangering the United States' infrastructure of opportunity, endangering our position in the world. Today we are going to have an opportunity to talk about some of those policies that are harmful to America now and America in the future.

President Trump's proposals on the budget, for example, would hurt the creation of jobs, the ability of people to get healthcare, would be bad for the environment, would do so much harm in so many ways. So I am honored tonight to be with three of my colleagues, all of us from different parts of the country: Myself from Texas, the congresswoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE), the congresswoman from Washington State (Ms. JAYAPAL), and the congresswoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ).

First I yield to the gentlewoman from Wisconsin, Congresswoman GWEN MOORE, because I know that she has some very strong opinions and perspectives on healthcare.

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I just want to tell you how grateful I am that my colleagues want to have this dialogue, this colloquy with me.

I have been so disturbed by the false information that is being given to Americans about the Affordable Care Act, the whole notion that it is somehow in this death spiral, that somehow the Affordable Care Act is dead. And I think that the President and our illustrious Speaker, and the majority are promoting this point of view because they want the public to believe that the things that they are doing to destroy the Affordable Care Act and, ultimately, Medicaid are the causes for them not having health insurance, the causes for their premiums rising, the causes for insurers fleeing the market in rural areas. And I just want to spend some time this evening sharing the truth with you all this evening.

The majority, they now have both houses of Congress: the Senate and the House of Representatives. They have the White House. And their message that ObamaCare or the Affordable Care