

the world, maybe doesn't finish high school or whatever, the outcome can be not that good for that child. I heard Mary Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund say these words. If a 16-year-old girl becomes pregnant, does not graduate from high school, does not marry the father of her child, there is an 80-percent likelihood they will live in poverty. The same 16-year-old girl who does not have a baby, finishes high school, graduates, waits until at least 21 to have a child, marries the father of the child, there is an 8-percent likelihood they will live in poverty. Think about that.

That suggests to me that we should—particularly for young people and those not so young who are sexually active—we want to make sure that when they are ready to bring a child into the world they can do that, a healthy child, a child with a lot of promise in their life.

For those who aren't prepared to bring that child, raise that child, prepare that child for success, contraception is needed. One of the things the Affordable Care Act does is provide access for that contraception. I am fearful the plan in the House of Representatives, however well-intentioned, will take away that opportunity for a lot of women and frankly for their children.

We have other people who have arrived on the floor. I want to be mindful of their time.

I don't know if we have another chart to look at before I yield.

We have all heard of double whammy. This has been described as TrumpCare, ObamaCare light, whatever you want to call it. It has a triple whammy. One of those is higher costs, a second is less coverage. And for some people, particularly low- and middle-income folks, more taxes. For certain people whose income is over one-quarter million dollars, they get a tax break. It adds up to quite a bit for somebody who makes a lot of money, but this is not the kind of triple whammy we ought to be supporting.

When the bill gets over here, if it gets out of the House, we will have a chance to slow down and hopefully do hearings in the light of day and bring in the folks from CBO, ask them to score this, let us know what is the real impact of what is being proposed in the House. Does it really save money? Does it do what President-Elect Trump said he wanted to do, which is make sure everybody gets coverage and be less expensive. Does it really do that? And we need to find out what the impact is on taxpayers. Is this the holy grail of better results for less money or is this something altogether different?

The Presiding Officer, from Missouri, is somebody who is pretty good at working across the aisle. I would like to think I am too. We have worked together on a number of issues. When you are working on something that is this big and this complex and has this kind of impact on our country, we are always better off if we can somehow fash-

ion a bipartisan compromise and something that would have bipartisan support.

We tried to do that in the Affordable Care Act. I know my Republican friends feel we didn't, but I was there. I know we tried. In fact, the evidence that we tried was literally the foundation for what we do for the Affordable Care Act, a Republican proposal from Senator Chafee and 20 other Republicans, including ORRIN HATCH and including CHUCK GRASSLEY from Iowa. I think that was a pretty good effort.

If this bill makes its way over here, we need to have at least a strong effort, maybe a better effort, maybe a more successful effort in the end.

If we are not going to repeal the Affordable Care Act, actually find a way to repair it and make it better, there are things we can do. I know I can think of some—I know the Presiding Officer can as well—that would move us closer to better coverage at a more affordable price.

The last thing I would say is this. I have a Bible study group that meets here on Thursdays with Barry Black, who opens our session with a prayer every day that we are in session. We also have his Bible study group that meets for about a half an hour, 45 minutes in the Capitol—Democrats and Republicans. We pray together, share things together. I describe it as the seven or eight of us who need the most help.

He is always reminding us of our obligation to the least of these. There is a passage of Scripture in Matthew 25 that a lot of us have heard of, and I am sure you have heard this in Missouri too. It says: When I was hungry, did you feed me? When I was naked, did you clothe me? When I was thirsty, did you get me to drink? When I was sick and imprisoned, did you visit me? When I was a stranger in your land, did you take me in?

It doesn't say anything about when I didn't have any healthcare coverage and my only access to healthcare was an emergency room to a hospital. It doesn't say that in Matthew 25. I think the implications are clear. They are the least of these as well. They need our help, and I think we have a moral obligation, as people of faith, to help them.

We also have a fiscal imperative because while the Federal deficit is down from \$1.4 trillion 6, 7, 8 years ago, down to about one-third of that, it is still high. We need to make more progress on that. We have a fiscal imperative to meet that moral imperative.

With that, I think I will call it quits. I know my colleagues will be disappointed, but they are standing here, from all over the country, waiting to say their piece. I am going to yield to them and wish them all a good weekend, and I look forward to seeing you on Monday.

I yield the floor.

Before I do, I yield the remainder of my postclosure debate time to Senator RON WYDEN of Oregon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

The Senator from Arkansas.

HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, when President Trump began his campaign for the White House, he made national security and, in particular, homeland security a cornerstone of his platform. His calls to secure the border to keep terrorists off U.S. soil and to protect our communities struck a chord with a large majority of Americans who for years felt that Washington ignored their very real concerns about our porous borders and broken immigration system.

As expected, the President moved quickly to deliver on his promises to fix this broken system. This week, the Trump administration rolled out a revised version of this Executive order aimed at restoring confidence in the procedures we have used to vet refugees fleeing from nations that are known to harbor radical and violent extremists.

The revised version appears to have benefited from the engagement of the President's Cabinet, especially the key input of Homeland Security Secretary Kelly. This valuable input underscores how important it is for the President to have his team in place to govern effectively.

Senate Democrats have slowed the confirmation process at every turn. I encourage them to abandon the political games so we can quickly fill the remaining vacancies that require Senate confirmation.

It is vital that every affected agency is engaged in these types of decisions. That isn't possible if the Senate is failing to do its duty to confirm the President's nominees. Congress has many problems to tackle, but protecting our Nation is at the top of that list. That requires we work together to govern.

It also requires we take a step back from the heated rhetoric and have honest conversations. Taking the fundamental steps to protect our homeland does not diminish the fact that we are a welcoming nation that strives to help the vulnerable.

It is no secret that ISIS and other volatile extremists want to exploit our Nation's generosity and welcoming spirit to sneak terrorists onto American soil. This plan has worked well in Europe. ISIS believes it can work here as well. We can, and must, take reasonable measures to prevent that.

It is reasonable, responsible, in fact, to put a pause on accepting refugees from these nations in order to fix the flaws in the process and instill confidence in the system. The revised order removes Iraq from the list of countries. That is a move in the right direction. It shows that the Iraqis have taken the right steps in agreeing to increase their cooperation with us, and effecting positive outcomes in our relations with these nations is what this pause is all about.

Four of the countries on this list don't even have a U.S. Embassy. So you can understand how difficult it is to get a complete picture of the refugees seeking asylum from those countries when we don't even have a means by which to communicate.

Once the President's Executive order goes into effect, every country will be evaluated within 20 days. If a country comes up short of where it needs to be, it will have 50 days to fix the failures and communications with us.

The reasonable measures we are taking to reduce this threat in no way run counter to the ideals our Nation is built upon. We can be proud of the resources the United States has provided to support those fleeing persecution in war-torn Syria. I have visited the refugee camps we support in Jordan and Turkey. Our commitment to their well-being is strong. The rhetoric doesn't match the realities when it comes to this issue.

The administration's efforts to secure our borders has been met with similar hyperbole. Again, there is nothing unreasonable about ensuring that we know who is coming into our Nation. We are a nation of immigrants and must remain welcoming to those who want to achieve the American dream. We should be proud of our record to naturalize those who immigrate here legally. We naturalize more new citizens per year than the rest of the world combined. Enforcing the law, ensuring the safety and security of our Nation, will not change our commitment to being a welcoming society to those who seek a better life.

But you can't create policies to secure our homeland while wearing rose-colored glasses. There are terrorists seeking to exploit our good graces so they can attack us here at home. This is not a scare tactic; this is reality, and we have to root our policies in reality.

As chairman of the Appropriations Homeland Security Subcommittee, I strongly support President Trump's efforts to get Washington to uphold our most important responsibility: protecting the American people. I stand ready to work with him, Secretary Kelly, and my colleagues to accomplish this goal.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise today to express my opposition to the confirmation of Seema Verma as Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, known as CMS.

As CMS Administrator, Ms. Verma would oversee healthcare coverage for more than 55 million seniors and disabled individuals in the Medicare Program. In addition, she would be the primary authority for the Medicaid Program, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and our Nation's health insurance marketplace. Together, these programs cover over 70 million Americans.

I have serious concerns that if confirmed, Ms. Verma will pursue short-

sighted changes to our healthcare system that could jeopardize care for working families, while providing huge benefits to corporate interests.

Ms. Verma has openly stated her desire to put insurance companies back in charge of our healthcare by allowing insurers to deny women maternity care coverage as an essential health benefit. She has also expressed support for proposals that would weaken essential health benefits that ensure coverage for mental healthcare, preventive screenings, and comprehensive pediatric care for children. These comprehensive services form the backbone of the healthcare system that invests in preventive care, improving outcomes, lowering costs, and puts consumers in charge of their own healthcare. Ms. Verma is proposing to take us back to the days when insurance companies were in control and when they would tell you what was best, not you or your doctor.

She has also expressed support for dangerous and radical proposals that would change Medicare as we know it. I believe that when it comes to Medicare, our future CMS Administrator should be doing everything he or she can to strengthen an incredibly successful program. Ms. Verma, instead, supports policies that reduce the quality of care and increase costs on older Americans.

Our Nation's seniors have worked hard their entire lives. We owe them a secure and dignified retirement. When Congress was first debating the Affordable Care Act in 2009, I heard from seniors who had split their pills in half or would forgo their prescriptions altogether just to put food on their table. This is simply unacceptable in this great country of ours.

It is important to remember that the Affordable Care Act extended the solvency of Medicare by more than a decade, while simultaneously bringing down prescription drug costs for seniors. Because of improvements to Medicare in the Affordable Care Act, the average senior in Michigan saved over \$1,000 on prescription drug costs in 2015.

While this shows the success the ACA has had in helping older Americans, there is still much more work to do. We must keep moving forward to strengthen and improve Medicare. I am concerned Ms. Verma will move us backward.

During her confirmation hearing, she failed to express her opposition to proposals that would increase Medicare's eligibility age. This means that Michigan's construction workers, nurses, and autoworkers would need to spend more years on their feet before they see the coverage they have earned.

Ms. Verma provided no clear direction on what she will do to strengthen the Medicare Program, and I am concerned that she sees older Americans as just one more line on a budget. These Americans have worked hard their entire lives, and the very last thing we should be doing is making

cuts at their expense. Instead, we should focus on proven advances in technology that improve Medicare and cut costs without jeopardizing care for seniors and disabled individuals.

I worked with my colleagues in Congress to introduce bipartisan proposals that will do just that. For example, Medicare spends one out of every three dollars on diabetes treatment. The total economic cost of diabetes is estimated to be \$245 billion every year. I have introduced bipartisan legislation that allows Medicare to enroll individuals at risk for developing diabetes into medical nutrition therapy services proven to decrease the likelihood they will develop diabetes in the first place. I have also introduced bipartisan legislation that expands Medicare's use of telemedicine, increasing access for patients in rural and underserved communities and bringing down future health costs by ensuring patients get the preventive care they need to stay healthy.

I will keep working to improve and modernize our healthcare system without sacrificing care for the most vulnerable. Unfortunately, I do not believe Ms. Verma shares this commitment. I am voting against Ms. Verma's nomination because our seniors and working families deserve a CMS Administrator who is fighting to improve their healthcare, not one who merely sees them as a budgetary obligation.

I will oppose her confirmation, and I strongly urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. President, I yield 35 minutes of my postclosure debate time to Senator WYDEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

Mr. PETERS. I yield the floor.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the nomination of Seema Verma for Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS.

We have before us a nominee that would run an agency responsible for the healthcare of more than 100 million Americans, with an annual budget of about \$1 trillion. This is the agency that administers Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and health insurance exchanges. In short, CMS is the single most consequential agency in health care.

Yes, I am deeply concerned about this administration's ideas on Medicare and on the individual insurance market, over both of which CMS has profound influence, but I am most concerned about their plans for Medicaid.

Based on Ms. Verma's history, her actions, her statements, and her testimony before the Senate Finance Committee, it is clear to me that Mrs. Verma is not only complicit but is leading the charge to wage a war on Medicaid.

Why do I say that? Let us look at Ms. Verma's record, actions, and testimony on Medicaid. In Indiana, Ms. Verma made millions of dollars in consulting

fees by kicking poor working people off of Medicaid for failure to pay monthly contributions similar to premiums. This plan forced people making \$10,000 a year, \$5,000 a year, or even homeless people with virtually no income to pay a monthly contribution or be penalized. As a result of Ms. Verma's work, about 2,500 Hoosiers have been cut from care. Evaluations of this plan by independent experts show it is confusing to beneficiaries and has not demonstrated better results than traditional Medicaid expansion. Meanwhile, enrollment is far lower than projected.

During my meeting with her and in her testimony before the Senate Finance Committee, Ms. Verma stated that Medicaid should not be an option for able-bodied people. Ms. Verma seems to think the private sector can serve this population on its own. Based on what we know about the historical affordability challenges in the individual health insurance market, I find this notion hard to believe.

My State is innovating in Medicaid through "rebalancing" from nursing homes to home and community care, integrating behavioral health and primary care, and adopting of innovative new waivers through collaboration with the Federal Government. In fact, Washington State realized more than \$2.5 billion in savings over 15 years through rebalancing efforts; yet Ms. Verma will not commit to a single delivery system reform idea.

Ms. Verma claims Medicaid is a top-down Federal power grab. On the contrary, Medicaid is an optional State program, with all States participating. Every State participates because they know Medicaid is a good strategy for covering a low-income and vulnerable population and supporting their healthcare delivery system. Medicaid is highly flexible right now, and States have wide latitude over eligibility, benefits, provider reimbursements, and overall administration of their Medicaid programs.

Ms. Verma claims Medicaid produces poor outcomes, but she cannot offer a single credible clinical outcome or quality measure that the program is not achieving. Meanwhile, data show that patient satisfaction in Medicaid is high and the program achieves improved public health and clinical outcomes for its patients.

Most concerning, Ms. Verma has repeatedly endorsed the administration and Republicans' plan to permanently cap Medicaid, which would hurt patients, States, health providers, and local economies.

I am voting no on Seema Verma's nomination for CMS Administrator because I cannot endorse a full-scale assault on the Medicaid Program.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, Seema Verma has a proven track record of helping States create patient-centered healthcare systems that improve quality and access and give individuals and families more control over their healthcare. Due to a family commit-

ment, I was unable to participate in the cloture vote. However, I strongly support Ms. Verma's nomination and look forward to working with her on the many important healthcare issues facing Florida and our country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO GLEN HANSON

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I have been coming down to the floor for the past several months recognizing Alaskans who make our State great and our country better for all of us. I really enjoy doing this because it gives me an opportunity to share the excellent work my citizens are doing in their communities. It also gives me a few minutes to highlight to all my colleagues here in the Senate—and to some of those Americans who might be watching at home—to talk a little bit more about the unique place I call home and am honored to serve and represent in the Senate.

This week, I would like to honor pilot Glen Hanson, who is right now somewhere flying above racing sled dogs in the far north in Alaska, literally as we speak.

Before I get to how he is helping Alaskans and how he is this week's Alaskan of the Week, let me take you back through a remarkable bit of history that happened in Nome, AK, in 1925, when a diphtheria serum was desperately needed for the children in Nome. The nearest batch of serum was 1,000 miles away in Anchorage, AK. There weren't—and still aren't—any roads that connect Nome to Anchorage. There was very challenging winter weather during this time, so no airplanes could fly. In fact, the nearest train station was over 700 miles away from Nome, so people traveled mostly by dog sled.

On the night of January 27, 1925, musher "Wild Bill" Shannon tied a 20-pound package of serum wrapped in protective fur around his sled. He and his nine dogs started the journey called then the "Great Race of Mercy" across the frozen Alaska land. Miles later, he met up with another racer and another team of dogs, and the relay continued all across Alaska, over 1,000 miles—20 mushers and 150 sled dogs—through some of the world's most rugged terrain and some of the world's most brutal weather. In fact, right now in parts of Alaska where the Iditarod is happening, it is 40 to 50 below zero.

That original race, the Great Race of Mercy, began to be reenacted, with some twists, in 1973 and continues today. In fact, it is going on right now, the Iditarod, the Last Great Race, in my great State. People from all across the world come to participate in it and come to watch it. It is the quintessential Alaskan event that involves the work of hundreds of Alaskans, lodge owners, veterinarians, dogs, dog handlers, volunteers, pilots—hundreds, thousands.

Alaska, as you might know, is home to more veterans per capita than any other State, but we are also home to more pilots per capita than any other State. Our pilots are a vital part of our economy and transportation, and they are a vital part of the Iditarod. In fact, the race couldn't exist without them.

Every year, more than a dozen volunteer pilots load their planes for the Iditarod race with more than 100,000 pounds of dog food, hundreds of bales of hay, and lumber for tents. They fly the veterinarians, the judges, the dog handlers, and so many of the volunteers out to the checkpoints hundreds of miles away. We call them the Iditarod Air Force, and every one of them deserves recognition.

That gets me back to Anchorage resident Glen Hanson, who is our Alaskan of the Week. Glen, along with his brother Bert, is tied among this year's pilots as the longest serving volunteer in the Iditarod Air Force. He began volunteering for the Last Great Race—the Iditarod Air Force—in 1984. Glen has since put in roughly 1,500 hours of volunteer time, making sure that the Last Great Race continues and that the dogs and the mushers are taken care of—taken care of right now in 40 to 50 below zero, as this race is going on.

This year, Glen won the Alaska Air Carriers Association Iditarod Humanitarian Service Award. Upon receiving it, the Air Carriers Association wrote to Glen:

You are obviously an accomplished pilot held in high regard by your peers. While there are many volunteers working to make the race possible, you consistently go above and beyond the call of duty. You are always quietly willing to take every assignment, no matter how unglamorous or uncomfortable. You step up time after time to fly in the challenging air strips to ensure that the musher supplies and race personnel are available to keep the race safe.

Thank you, Glen, for all you do to keep our great Alaska history alive. And thanks to all the pilots in the Iditarod Air Force this year and so many of the other volunteers who keep everybody safe—and are doing it right now during this year's Iditarod. And to all the mushers and these great dogs, good luck. Everyone involved makes this truly the last great race in America.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO MASTER SERGEANT KEARY MILLER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today it is my honor to congratulate retired MSgt Keary Miller of the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123 Special