

In a broader sense, TrumpCare violates what this President promised to working Americans. He promised to be a champion for working Americans. He promised to be their voice. That is how he presented himself in his inaugural address. But TrumpCare would hurt working Americans the most, making them pay more for less care.

It seems the only people who really benefit, the only group who benefits financially—if you are in the top 0.1 percent of earners, TrumpCare gives you a nearly \$200,000 tax break, on average. This is the group who benefits. They may not be the only group, but they are the group who benefits the most, far and away. If you are in the middle class, if you are struggling to make it into the working class, if you are older or from a rural area, your costs are going to go up by thousands of dollars a year. So many of these people voted for Trump for President, but the only people who get that huge tax break of an average of \$200,000 a year are the top 0.1 percent. In a very real sense, Donald Trump is giving a huge tax break to the wealthy and then making working Americans, average Americans, pay for it. To some, it might seem that the whole purpose of TrumpCare is to give that huge tax break to the wealthy.

In his inaugural address, President Trump spoke of an America where for far too long a small group has reaped the rewards of government, while the people have borne the cost. TrumpCare seems designed to fulfill that vision, not alter it. It makes it even easier on that small group, shifting even more costs onto the people.

So the first few months of the Trump administration have been broken promise after broken promise to working families. Trump's words: We are going to help working America, middle-class America. Trump's action: Take the burden off the shoulders of the top 1 percent and put them on the shoulders of all other Americans.

TrumpCare might constitute the greatest broken promise of them all. That is why I expect our Republican leadership in the House is rushing this bill through the Chamber. They don't want the American people to see it and learn what is in it. I don't think they want their own Members to have much time to consider it. That is why it was released on a Monday and a vote in committee was scheduled just a few days later. Already the bill has gone through one committee markup in the House without a score from CBO.

After years of criticizing Democrats for rushing through healthcare, after chanting "read the bill" over and over again, Republicans are trying to pass their healthcare plan in 2 months, when Democrats took almost a full year to debate and pass the Affordable Care Act.

Even Republican Senators like my friend from Arkansas, Mr. COTTON, are telling their colleagues in the House to pause and start over. The Republicans in the House ought to listen because

this mess of a bill will badly hurt millions of Americans. Even though we disagree on the substance, I would echo my friend from Arkansas, Senator COTTON, in saying to House Republicans: Stop and think about this. You can drop "repeal" and come talk to us Democrats about reasonable fixes to the Affordable Care Act instead of blindly moving forward with this sham of a bill. That would be a much better way for your party and for our country.

BUDGET RIDER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, one final point on another matter. Today, the Democratic leadership of the Senate sent a letter to Leader MCCONNELL and Chairman COCHRAN. We, of course, laid out our concerns about the budget and reiterated the guiding rules that helped us pass a budget for the first time in a while last year. We believe that we should stick to the spending levels that were agreed to in December, that we should maintain a parity between defense and nondefense, and that there should be no poison pill riders.

It is rumored that one of those poison pill riders might be a supplemental added to the CR that would call for paying for President Trump's wall. That will not stand.

The President wants a wall but has not answered so many questions about it. What about eminent domain and the procedures to acquire land from private landowners? What is the design of the wall? Where is it going to be located? How is it going to be paid for, and how much will it cost? Don't you think we ought to give the President some time to have Mexico pay for the wall? That is what he said throughout his campaign, that Mexico will pay for it.

That is why both Democratic and Republican Members of Congress who represent the border States object to this wall. It will be inappropriate, in our judgment, to insist on the inclusion of such funding in a must-pass appropriations bill that is needed for the Republican majority in the control of Congress to avert a government shutdown. It is truly a poison pill. We would urge our colleagues not to allow the President to include this in a must-pass bill that avoids a shutdown of the government.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Seema Verma, of Indiana, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in favor of the nomination of Seema Verma to serve as the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

I think we can all agree that this is a critical time for healthcare in America. Health costs continue to rise, and patients face growing uncertainty over coverage. At the same time, the health of too many Americans continues to decline, healthcare costs continue to grow, and millions of new baby boomers are becoming eligible for Medicare each and every year.

I might add, you heard the minority leader talk today as if Democrats have had nothing to do with all of this mess. Much to the contrary. Congress and our new President face intense pressure to address these challenges, and the stakes are very high. I am confident that Ms. Verma is up for that challenge. She has over two decades of experience working with State healthcare and industry leaders to reform and improve services for the most vulnerable members of our community. Ms. Verma's experience as an entrepreneur and industry leader allowed her to work extensively on a wide variety of policy and strategic projects involving Medicaid, insurance, and public health in conjunction with the Indiana Governor's office, State Medicaid agencies, State health departments, State departments of insurance, the Federal Government, and private companies and foundations. She has had a tremendous amount of experience in those areas, and I have every confidence that she will be a great leader. There are few professionals in the country who have her level of close relationships with State leaders that will be critical as Congress and the administration work to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act—the so-called Affordable Care Act; it is anything but affordable.

Medicaid represents an enormous burden on State budgets, and we now have an unprecedented opportunity to reform a Federal entitlement program long in need of structural changes. Ms. Verma is the ideal candidate to oversee the reform of the Medicaid Program and take steps administratively to give States the flexibility they have been clamoring for.

In Indiana, Ms. Verma worked with Governors Daniels and Pence to design a Medicaid expansion program that extended health coverage to nearly

400,000 low-income working Americans. She did so in a way that empowered people to take greater responsibility for their own health by providing incentives to use healthcare resources efficiently. The program ensured that many people got health care coverage for the first time. Now this innovative program has become a national model for other States.

Ms. Verma's experience will be invaluable as we work together to improve healthcare across the country and bring down the costs thereof. In addition to her work in Indiana, Ms. Verma has developed several other Medicaid reform programs, including 1,115 Medicaid waivers for Iowa, Ohio, and Kentucky. Her firm helped design Tennessee's coverage expansion proposal and also provided technical assistance to Michigan when the State implemented its Medicaid waiver. She also helped guide the transition of Iowa's Medicaid Program to a managed care program and supported strategy efforts for Maine's Medicaid plan.

Having dealt with CMS in her capacity as a consultant working on these myriad projects, she knows firsthand what is needed to make the programs work effectively. Her job as CMS Administrator will not be easy, and that is a heck of an understatement.

CMS is the world's largest health insurer. It has a budget of over \$1 trillion and processes over 1.2 billion claims a year for services provided to some of our Nation's most vulnerable citizens receiving Medicare and Medicaid. As such, this is a critical agency, and we need a qualified, dedicated leader at the helm. She is certainly that.

In addition to ensuring that Medicare and Medicaid work effectively, Ms. Verma will also be charged with helping to ensure the longevity and solvency of the Medicare trust fund, which is projected to go bankrupt in the year 2028. Maintaining the solvency of the Medicare Program while continuing to provide care for an ever-increasing beneficiary base is going to require creative solutions, skillful administration, and a lot of knowledge and experience.

All told, between now and 2030, 76 million baby boomers will become eligible for Medicare. Even factoring in deaths over that period, the program will grow from approximately 47 million beneficiaries today to roughly 80 million beneficiaries in 2030. This will also create challenges that will require steady leadership and, at times, decisive action.

I believe Ms. Verma is especially qualified to lead CMS and modernize its programs to increase its effectiveness of healthcare delivery. She brings the experience and, importantly, bipartisan solutions that can and should unite people across the political spectrum in addressing some of the greatest challenges in our healthcare system.

Ms. Verma has a keen understanding of patients' needs. She certainly has

the expertise to create a healthcare law that this country needs and improve the lives of the 100 million Americans covered by Medicare and Medicaid.

At a time when the healthcare challenges we face are very real and extremely complex, our Nation needs leaders, like Ms. Verma, who have demonstrated their ability to deliver results.

I know that many people have different ideas about the best direction for the Medicare and Medicaid Programs and how we should meet the complex challenges facing CMS. While we can disagree on policy, we should all agree that the agency needs smart, experienced leadership at its helm.

That being the case, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting Ms. Verma's nomination to this important position. I personally am very grateful that she is willing to dive into this very difficult process and these problems right in the middle of politics being played and that she is willing to do the job America needs at this particular time, especially for those who need healthcare.

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

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

WIRETAPPING ALLEGATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, there are a couple of issues that I will speak on, but I was asked earlier this morning about what President Trump has tweeted, basically charging former President Obama with having spied on him in a way that would be plainly illegal. Of course, President Obama's advisers have denied any such thing happened. If it did happen, of course, it would be a grave constitutional issue, and if such a thing did happen, it would be criminal conduct. Now, many people are saying: Well, is it true or not? Was Mr. Trump telling the truth in the tweet or not? There is a very simple response on this. There is one person who knows whether it is true or not, and he has been totally silent on this.

They asked Attorney General Sessions. Attorney General Sessions made it very clear in his confirmation hearing—well, he said a number of things in his confirmation hearing, but one was, of course, that he would be independent. President Trump has leveled very serious charges against former President Obama. I happen to feel the charges are false, but let's have a definitive voice. The Attorney General should have the courage and independence to simply say whether Mr. Trump is telling the truth or not. It is a very simple matter. I would hope that the press and everybody else would keep asking because eventually somebody

has to answer that question, and the Attorney General can.

NOMINATION OF DAVID FRIEDMAN

Mr. President, the Senate will soon consider the nomination of David Friedman to be U.S. Ambassador to Israel. Unlike several of President Trump's other nominees, we know a great deal about Mr. Friedman's views on the challenges he would confront if he were confirmed. Unfortunately, this is because he has made a career of disparaging and inflammatory statements about U.S. policy in the Middle East, about former U.S. officials, about the Palestinians, even about American Jews who have views that differ from his own.

We have all had the opportunity to read articles Mr. Friedman has written. We have heard the outrageous, unfounded verbal attacks he has launched against those who disagree with him. He has written falsely that President Obama and Secretary Kerry engaged in "blatant anti-Semitism," that the liberal American Jews are "far worse than kapos," and that they "suffer a cognitive disconnect in identifying good and evil," that the State Department has a "hundred-year history of anti-Semitism," because diplomats appointed by both Republican Presidents and Democratic Presidents have not always seen eye-to-eye on every issue with Israel's leaders. He has said that Israel's policy of "criticizing disloyal Arab citizens while simultaneously bestowing upon them the benefits of citizenship simply isn't working."

Well, those comments alone should disqualify him for this sensitive position, and it is no surprise that tens of thousands of Americans have signed petitions circulated by pro-Israel groups opposing his nomination.

Mr. Friedman has also raised millions of dollars for Israeli settlers, and he has bragged about the effort to remove the two-state solution from the Republican Party's platform, even though Democratic and Republican Presidents have supported it. Regarding the two-state solution, he wrote: "It is more of an illusion that serves the worst intentions of both the United States and the Palestinian Arabs," in one of the many articles he has written for a rightwing Israeli media outlet. That unequivocal renunciation of longstanding U.S. policy should also by itself disqualify him from the job of Ambassador to Israel.

These statements and actions not only indicate his rejection of decades of Republican and Democratic policy. They are the words of someone who makes a mockery of the term "diplomat" and who has demonstrated no ability to be objective and constructive on sensitive issues of immense importance to U.S. security.

Our diplomats are supposed to be representing the American people and the policies of the United States first and foremost. They are not sent to a foreign country to represent the government or people of that country in a