

and the imagined rationale that the President gave.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. President, secret meetings have been happening amongst our Republican colleagues to draft a healthcare bill that could have devastating consequences on the people we all represent. I know we are about to have a vote on the floor, but I wanted to come to the floor to simply remind all of my friends on both sides of the aisle of the promises that have been made about this process and this piece of legislation which emerged from the House last week with devastating consequences. Those consequences include 24 million people losing coverage and people with preexisting conditions being subjected to \$200,000 premium increases, potentially.

I just reference the words of the President of the United States, who told us repeatedly over and over again, during the campaign and after the campaign, that the result of this healthcare reform debate was going to be a healthcare system that was better. President Trump outlined that in a number of different ways.

Here is what he said on April 30, just a few weeks ago. He said:

The healthcare plan is on its way. Will have much lower premiums & deductibles, while at the same time taking care of pre-existing conditions!

That is not true. That is a lie. The healthcare bill that emerged from the House of Representatives did none of those things.

CBO has not come out with its final estimate. It is unbelievable that the House voted on a reordering of one-sixth of the American economy without a CBO estimate, but we can pretty much be sure that the first CBO estimate will hold, in that it will say that premiums are going to go up by 15 to 20 percent immediately for everybody, and then for the nonyoung healthy and wealthy, premiums are going to go up even higher.

It didn't take care of preexisting conditions. It did the opposite—allowed every State to be able to walk away from the protection of the Affordable Care Act, which makes sure people with preexisting conditions, which could be one-third of all Americans, can't be subject to higher rates, and it substituted that requirement with a high-risk pool which is dramatically underfunded to the point that it is laughable, in the opinion of many healthcare economists.

Here is what Donald Trump said earlier this year:

We're going to have insurance for everybody. People covered under the law can expect to have great healthcare. . . . Much less expensive and much better insurance for everybody.

CBO says 24 million people will lose their insurance, and that number might be higher when the new estimate comes out. This wasn't true. This was a lie.

Finally, the President said, during the campaign:

I was the first & only potential GOP candidate to state there will be no cuts to Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid.

No cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—this is a giant cut to Medicaid. This is an \$880 billion cut to Medicaid being used to finance a giant tax cut for people making over \$200,000 a year. This wasn't true. This was a lie as well.

A lot of Democrats will be willing to talk about making our healthcare system better, but we want our Republican colleagues, as they are having these behind-closed-door meetings, to remember the promises that were made. They said nobody would lose insurance, premiums would go down—not up—and your benefit package wouldn't become worse. If Republicans can deliver on those promises, then there is a discussion to be had. But if anything looking like the House product emerges, it is a violation of the promises this President and many Republicans made over and over again.

Finally, I also want all my colleagues to remember what is happening as we speak. Leader MCCONNELL was on the floor talking about premium increases announced by Blue Cross Blue Shield in Maryland. What he failed to mention was the head of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Maryland came out and specifically said that a big part of the reason they were asking for major premium increases was because of the actions President Trump is taking right now to sabotage the Affordable Care Act. They were not sure the individual mandate was going to be enforced. Why? Because in an Executive order this President signed, he directed his agencies to undermine the Affordable Care Act and to withdraw many of the fees levied on Americans, such as that which comes if you don't get insurance. He stopped advertising for the exchanges for the last week. We were on target to have more people sign up this year than ever before; but then, in the last week, the President withdrew all the money for the exchanges. Right now, as we speak, this administration is bleeding out the money for insurers to help pay for cost sharing within the exchanges 1 month at a time, not telegraphing if there is going to be any certainty for that funding in the future.

The President is undermining and sabotaging the ACA every single day. The reason insurers are passing along premium increases or considering withdrawing from these exchanges is because of this sabotage the administration is undertaking of our entire healthcare system. I hope these behind-closed-door meetings take into account all of the promises this President and our Republican friends made that they would repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with something better. Everything we hear is that the product that emerged out of the House of Representatives—the product that may emerge out of the Senate—violates every single one of these promises.

We await the ability to work together, Republicans and Democrats, to

preserve what works in the healthcare system, to fix what doesn't work, and to hold our Republican friends and the President of the United States to their promises.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there are 20 minutes of postcloture time remaining, equally divided between the chairman and the ranking member of the Committee on Finance, prior to a vote on the Lighthizer nomination.

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague and good friend, Chairman HATCH, for his courtesies. We have worked very closely together on this nomination. This was a challenging task, and I thank Chairman HATCH for his cooperation.

Mr. Lighthizer needed a waiver because he had represented foreign interests. It was extremely important that we work with Senator MANCHIN and other colleagues to address the enormous needs of the miners, and we had a whole host of Members with a variety of extremely important trade issues—matters like steel, aluminum, and digital goods in our part of the world; we also care about softwood lumber tremendously.

Chairman HATCH and I worked with all the members of the Finance Committee. It was a unanimous vote, and I thank him for his cooperation.

We have talked a little bit about trade and what a modern trade policy is going to look like. The Lighthizer discussion is the beginning of the debate on trade in this Congress, and I have tried to be clear about my agenda. My agenda is to create more red, white, and blue jobs in America—high-skilled, high-waged jobs. Very often, the trade jobs pay better than do the nontrade jobs because there is more value added in them; there is a higher level of productivity. So my view is, as we set out on this journey to get more high-skilled, high-waged jobs, look to Asia where there are going to be 1 billion middle-class people there in a few years. What we ought to do is focus on growing them in the United States, making them in the United States, adding value to them in the United States, and then shipping them somewhere. That is my idea of a modern trade agenda.

So far, the administration's trade agenda amounts to a muddle of 140-character tweets, mixed messages, and overhyped announcements that seem to be backed by not much substance. I think we are going to have to put together a coherent strategy quickly to promote our exports and fight back against trade cheats. That is not exactly what we have seen from the administration to date.

We can almost suffer whiplash from the reports about what happens with various trade deals. Late at night, it was reported that the President is about to pull the United States out of NAFTA; then suddenly there is another

report saying he has changed his mind after a conversation with the Canadians. Next, at a moment of extreme tension on the Korean Peninsula, it is reported that the President is threatening to pull out of the U.S.-Korea trade agreement. Then suddenly that threat is walked back. So the President has made some major statements with respect to trade deals on the books, but he has yet to give us much in the way of specifics on how he would like to bring that about.

If one is trying to run a business in Oregon or around the United States that exports to foreign markets, it is pretty hard not to feel rattled and confused by some of the President's statements and tweets about trade. One might even make the decision not to invest and not to hire additional workers. I hope the President will soon see that some of the uncertainty and confusion that has been stoked as a negotiating tactic is not a recipe for creating red, white, and blue jobs.

I do think Robert Lighthizer knows what the challenge is really all about, and I want to tell him I have appreciated our conversations. He is a real pro at this. I have appreciated his views, particularly on digital goods, which I think are so important to our burgeoning technology sector, and his views on Canadian lumber.

I would also like to state at this time that I think very highly of Secretary Ross. He has been very constructive in our conversations, particularly on Canadian softwood lumber.

Obviously, the U.S. Trade Representative will lead our country in trade negotiations, and that will be Mr. Lighthizer's role. The bulk of the expertise of trade does reside within his office. When Mr. Lighthizer is confirmed, as I hope he will be and expect he will be, this expertise will no longer be silent.

I will wrap up simply by way of saying that the United States may be the world's largest economy, but it represents only 4 percent of the world's consumers. Red, white, and blue jobs in the United States depend on our ability to sell to the other 96 percent. The number of middle-class households around the world is going to double over the next decade. This represents a lot of potential buying power for the American brand, the Oregon brand. The fact is, people all over the world love buying the goods and the services we make. It is going to take a lot of hard work to smash through the barriers that block American-made goods and fight back against trade cheats.

Lastly, the trade rules in many particulars are out of date, so we have a lot of work to do to promote labor rights, combat human trafficking, crack down on trade in illegally taking wildlife and endangered species, and get the trade system updated so it includes things like digital goods and small businesses that now have an international reach, which is especially important. The trading system has to

respond more quickly to countries that break the rules or are unfairly producing basic commodities, such as steel and aluminum. This is especially true with respect to China.

As policymakers, we must continue to take an honest look at the trade rules and fix what doesn't work so that American workers aren't left behind. It is long past time to invest more resources in monitoring, litigating, and enforcing our trading partners' obligations, including China's. The United States must respond more aggressively and more rapidly to threats to U.S. workers and businesses.

There was a recent example of how this is done right when the Commerce Department said "enough" to Canada's unfairly traded softwood lumber. The steps the Commerce Department took were undeniably warranted after mill towns in Oregon and many other States have been clobbered over the last few decades. My first preference is a long-term agreement with Canada, but if they are not going to come to the table, I will keep fighting for our mills and mill jobs, and I will insist the administration do the same.

The U.S. needs to carry that same steadfast approach across the board—getting trade enforcement right is not just a lumber issue. That means more resources for boots on the ground: investigators and enforcers. Not just at the office of the USTR but also at Customs and Border Protection and the Departments of Commerce, Agriculture, Labor, State, and Interior, where investigators are tasked with stopping trade in illegally taken wildlife. Bottom line, trade enforcement requires all hands on deck. If you boost trade enforcers at one agency only to wipe out the trade enforcers at another, you will fail to protect American workers from unfair or illegal imports.

So I will be looking closely at the budget that the President submits to determine whether he is serious about delivering real results on trade enforcement or whether the campaign rhetoric and dramatic tweets are just a bunch of hot air.

In recognition of the need for a new approach on trade enforcement, Congress recently passed new laws that give the President better tools to respond when trading partners don't follow the rules. It also passed legislation to strengthen domestic laws that enable the U.S. to unilaterally respond when American jobs are under threat, and it provided new direction should the President wish to negotiate new trade agreements or renegotiate past ones. In the coming months, I expect that those tools will not just sit and gather dust while the administration talks tough with respect to trade.

It takes consistency, strategy and a lot of hard work to get trade done right. I have confidence that Robert Lighthizer will work to pursue a trade agenda that is coherent, constructive, and will deliver for American workers, and I will support his nomination.

However, I want to express reservation on one issue pertaining to this nominee. During his confirmation hearing, Senator STABENOW asked Mr. Lighthizer how he would deal with situations in which he was conducting trade negotiations with a country in which the President has business interests. Senator STABENOW wanted to make sure that the President's personal financial interests wouldn't take precedence over the public interest. Mr. Lighthizer seemed surprised by the question, saying, quote, "the idea that this President would do anything untoward is . . . far out of the realm of possibility."

I would like to put Mr. Lighthizer on notice. This is a legitimate issue, and I share Senator STABENOW's concern. Never before has this country faced a circumstance in which our trade representative will be negotiating trade agreements with countries in which the President or his family have active business interests, whether it is trademarks, golf courses, or construction deals. I have introduced a bill requiring the President, when initiating trade negotiations, to disclose whether he has business interests in the country that we will be negotiating with. I intend to press this issue as trade negotiations move forward. Trade should be about fighting on behalf of American workers and businesses. It is not about the President's bottom line.

Finally, on an issue that has been closely related to this nomination, I want to commend several of my colleagues for working together to provide relief to retired mineworkers regarding their healthcare costs. Senator MANCHIN has been a crusader on behalf of the mineworkers. Hardly a week went by over the last several months when I didn't hear from JOE MANCHIN about how important it was to get the mineworkers the healthcare benefits they have earned. And he has worked hand-in-hand with Senators BROWN, CASEY, and WARNER, all of whom serve on the Finance Committee. Chairman HATCH deserves thanks for working with us to get this across the finish line as well.

I see that my good friend, Chairman HATCH, is here to make his remarks. I thank him for the cooperation he has shown. I think the interests of both sides in processing this nomination have been advanced.

A lot could have gone awry here. We had challenges with getting the waiver Mr. Lighthizer needed. We needed the space to make sure the miners were protected. Members had strong views.

I thank Chairman HATCH for the diplomacy and cooperation he showed me and our side. I think that is why there was a very large vote for Mr. Lighthizer in the committee.

I will be voting aye this afternoon and look forward to the Chairman's wrap-up remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, who is an excellent person to work with. We enjoy each other and enjoy working together. We are getting a lot done, and I appreciate his kind remarks here today.

I rise today in support of the nomination of Robert Lighthizer to be the next United States Trade Representative. Mr. Lighthizer was reported out of the Finance Committee unanimously—Democrats and Republicans—and I hope he receives a similarly strong bipartisan vote here on the floor.

By statute, Congress has designated the USTR as the primary official for developing and coordinating U.S. trade policy, advising the President on trade, and leading international trade negotiations. The USTR must also report directly to and consult closely with Congress on a wide range of issues affecting international commerce. The USTR is Congress's first and most important point of contact when it comes to trade policy. Therefore, in order for Congress to have an effective voice in shaping our Nation's trade agenda, we need to have a fully staffed and functional USTR office.

For that reason, I have been very critical of the pointless and unprecedented delays we have faced in filling this vacancy, in filling this position, due to some unreasonable demands from some of my friends on the other side of the aisle. This delay has served only to weaken Congress's position in trade policy and has hampered our ability to provide the new administration with substantive input. Despite this ill-advised delay, I am pleased that Mr. Lighthizer's nomination has finally been brought to the floor, and I thank my colleagues for that.

Mr. Lighthizer's years of experience in public service, including as staff director for the Senate Finance Committee, as Deputy USTR during the Reagan administration, and in private practice, make him extremely well qualified to serve as our Nation's representative. Mr. Lighthizer's knowledge and experience will be vital to his service in this position and vital to our country.

Put simply, growing our economy and creating better paying jobs for American workers require increased U.S. trade. Toward that end, I have spoken to Mr. Lighthizer about the importance of removing trade barriers for American businesses, workers, consumers, and, where those barriers have already been removed, maintaining the status quo.

I know there is quite a bit of discussion going around about potential changes to the North American Free Trade Agreement. As I told Mr. Lighthizer, there are definitely opportunities to update and improve NAFTA, but it is important that the administration follow the spirit of the Hippocratic Oath: First do no harm.

Mr. Lighthizer and I have also discussed the importance of protecting

U.S. intellectual property rights around the globe through strong enforcement and better rules in trade agreements. I believe he recognizes the importance of this priority, and I will work to ensure that this issue plays a prominent role in our future trade negotiations.

I have also made clear to Mr. Lighthizer that I believe consultation on trade policy between Congress and the administration is essential, particularly if our agreements are going to adhere to the standards Congress put forward in the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015, the statute that included the most recent reauthorization of trade promotion authority.

On this key point, I believe Mr. Lighthizer and I are in agreement. As U.S. Trade Representative, Mr. Lighthizer will have the task of holding our trading partners accountable, ensuring that Americans don't pay more for the products their families need and helping American businesses and workers sell more of their goods and services around the globe.

This is not an easy job, but I am confident that Mr. Lighthizer is up to the task. As chairman of the Senate committee with jurisdiction over our Nation's trade policy, I am committed to working with him to ensure that we advance a trade agenda that will grow our economy, create more jobs, and expand market access around the globe for America's farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers.

Mr. President, I suggest we vote on Mr. Lighthizer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Lighthizer nomination?

Mr. WICKER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) would have voted "yea."

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 82, nays 14, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 127 Ex.]

YEAS—82

Alexander	Booker	Cardin
Baldwin	Boozman	Carper
Barrasso	Brown	Casey
Bennet	Burr	Cassidy
Blunt	Cantwell	Cochran

Collins	Heitkamp	Peters
Coons	Heller	Portman
Corker	Hirono	Risch
Cornyn	Hoeven	Roberts
Cortez Masto	Inhofe	Rounds
Cotton	Johnson	Rubio
Crapo	Kaine	Scott
Cruz	Kennedy	Shaheen
Daines	King	Shelby
Donnelly	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Duckworth	Lankford	Strange
Durbin	Leahy	Tester
Enzi	Lee	Thune
Ernst	Manchin	Tillis
Feinstein	McCaskill	Toomey
Fischer	McConnell	Udall
Flake	Menendez	Van Hollen
Franken	Moran	Warner
Graham	Murphy	Wicker
Grassley	Murray	Wyden
Hassan	Nelson	Young
Hatch	Paul	
Heinrich	Perdue	

NAYS—14

Blumenthal	McCain	Schatz
Gardner	Merkley	Schumer
Gillibrand	Reed	Warren
Harris	Sanders	Whitehouse
Markey	Sasse	

NOT VOTING—4

Capito	Murkowski
Isakson	Sullivan

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, there is a saying, an old adage, that history doesn't repeat, but it rhymes.

Over the past week, the dramatic firing of James Comey has recalled past events—history that involved one of the major scandals in our Nation's past—the Watergate scandal.

In Watergate, the saying originated—another very common saying—that the coverup is worse than the crime. The danger now in the United States—the greatest country in the history of the world, with the most effective and fair justice on our planet—is that, in fact, there may be a coverup, and that the truth will be stifled, and people who should be held accountable will not be. That is the danger.

In this instance, in comparison to Watergate, actually, the crime is extraordinarily serious. In Watergate, there was a two-bit break-in or burglary, and the coverup, in fact, involved obstruction of justice. What we have here is a deliberate, purposeful assault on our American democracy by the Russians through a cyber attack that involved, really, in effect, an act of war—a combination of cyber, propaganda, and misinformation spread deliberately; it involved hacking into both major parties and the spread of the results of that hacking for one of those parties—possibly influencing the outcome of the election.

The issue of whether and how the outcome of that election may have