

more indirectly, such as figuring out what exactly was said in the room with the Russian Foreign Minister and Ambassador, but all of it is clearly within what the Constitution requires and the Founding Fathers wanted Congress to be. So the congressional committees have really an obligation to our democracy to continue their role.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, on another matter—healthcare. Today, the Trump administration delayed for another 90 days their decision on whether to defend the administration's position in a lawsuit filed by the House Republicans about the cost-sharing payments in the Affordable Care Act. It is a decision that greatly increases the uncertainty in our healthcare system.

The cost-sharing program keeps healthcare costs low for working Americans and helps insurers stay in the marketplace, giving Americans more choices. It keeps the average person's premiums down, keeps their deductibles low. It makes it a lot easier for many working Americans to afford healthcare. That was its purpose, and it is succeeding in its purpose, but by continuing to sow uncertainty about this program, both by refusing to defend the lawsuit and by making outright threats to end it, the Trump administration has already caused insurers to flee the marketplace or propose rate increases for the next year. Let me repeat. Right now, the Trump administration's actions are sowing great uncertainty that causes insurers to pull out of States and increase their costs, making it more likely that working Americans won't be able to afford coverage next year.

A spokesperson for America's Health Insurance Plans, AHIP, the industry's main trade group, said the following, and this is their quote, not mine:

We need swift action and long-term certainty on [the cost-sharing program]. It is the single most destabilizing factor in the individual market, and millions of Americans could soon feel the impact of fewer choices, higher costs and reduced access to care.

The insurance industry itself is saying that the No. 1 thing that could be done to keep costs down, to keep other insurers in the marketplace, is to make permanent cost sharing.

President Trump's attempt to blame what is happening on ObamaCare is totally contradicted by what the health insurance plans say when it comes to cost sharing. So refusing to guarantee the cost-sharing payments is sabotage, plain and simple, and the Trump administration knows it.

The administration made the last cost-sharing payment but refuses to say they will continue to make them permanently. They know they will get blamed for the chaos that would ensue should they end these payments. They are afraid to do that. But they also want to threaten the stability of the healthcare system in order to get Democrats to work with them on their healthcare bill. So what they tried to

do is have their cake and eat it too. They said: We are going to delay the lawsuit, but we are still going to have that uncertainty that hurts Americans out there. That is profoundly irresponsible.

Threatening to defund healthcare in order to win political leverage is hostage-taking at its very worst because it holds hostage millions of innocent Americans who very much need healthcare costs to be lower and affordable. It is already causing massive uncertainty. It will only get worse if the administration continues to kick the can down the road 3 months at a time.

There is one very simple solution: Instead of delaying the decision every 3 months, the White House ought to step up to the plate and say once and for all that they will make those payments permanently—payments which help millions of Americans pay less for their healthcare, payments which the insurance industry itself says would help stabilize markets and help people gain healthcare.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Next, Mr. President, on the budget, the President of the United States will release his budget for 2018 this week. It could come as early as tomorrow. All indications are that it will be similar to his skinny budget from earlier this year. I want to remind everyone here in the Senate what a disaster that budget would be if it were ever implemented by Congress.

The President told the American people he would help create jobs and provide greater economic security for families. This budget does exactly the opposite. It is not a jobs budget. It is not an economic security budget. It is a budget that takes a meat cleaver to the middle class by gutting programs that help them the most, including many that create jobs and power the economy. Transportation is cut. Education is cut. Programs that promote scientific and medical research are cut. Programs that protect clean air and clean water are cut. All of these programs are favored by the American people. They have been favored by a vast majority of my Republican friends across the aisle. But the President's budget is an outlier, way out there. It fits with Mr. Mulvaney's beliefs, but he was an outlier in the Congress when he called for the government to be shut down and when he wanted to have the government play so little a role in helping the middle class. That is harmful to America.

Here is another one that really is worrisome: Recent reports say that the President's budget will target Medicaid for significant cuts—as large or larger than the \$880 billion the House Republicans would cut in their TrumpCare bill. This would pull the rug out from so many Americans who need help—those suffering from opioid and heroin addiction, people in nursing homes and their families who care for them, the elderly, the disabled, and children.

Medicaid has become a middle-class program. Opioid addiction. What about

a 40- or 50-year-old couple who is trying to raise their kids, saving for college, and has a parent who needs to be in a nursing home. Right now, Medicaid pays for it. What are they going to do when that is cut? They have two choices: Shell a huge amount of money out of their own pockets, which they can't afford, or maybe bring mom or dad back home, where there may be no room for them. What a horrible choice. What a horrible choice. Well, that is what the President is proposing to do when he dramatically slashes Medicaid.

I will repeat. Medicaid helps the very poor, but it also helps the middle class, and the majority of its money now seems to go to the middle class. I believe something like 60 percent goes to nursing homes or some high percentage like that.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that a cut to Medicaid of this size would deprive roughly 10 million Americans of Medicaid benefits over the next decade. Medicaid has always benefited the poor, and that is a good thing, but I remind my colleagues that it has increasingly become a middle-class program. Here is where it goes: Medicaid provides benefits for 60 percent of Americans in nursing homes.

Listen to this, Mr. President and my colleagues: Medicaid helps 1.75 million veterans—1 in 10. It provides services for Americans struggling with opioid addiction, which is a problem that affects so many.

If the reporting is accurate, these cuts to Medicaid that are in the President's budget carry a staggering human cost. Once again, Donald Trump is breaking his promise to the working people of America.

We have seen promise after promise broken as if they did not even matter. What he said in the campaign and what he governs as has almost no overlap in so many areas. Here is what Candidate Trump said when he campaigned: "I'm not going to cut Social Security like every other Republican and I'm not going to cut Medicare or Medicaid." He promised he would help take care of those suffering from opioid addiction. If he cuts Medicaid, he is breaking that promise—boom—right in half.

Candidate Trump campaigned as a populist and said he wanted to help the working people, but since he has taken office, he has governed like a hard-right conservative, pushing policies that help the uber-wealthy at the expense of the middle class. TrumpCare and the budget the President will be proposing tomorrow says one thing and does another.

Many of my Republican friends come from States that have significantly expanded their Medicaid Programs over the past few years, insuring hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions of their constituents.

Based on what we know about this budget, the good news—the only good news—is that it is likely to be roundly rejected by Members of both parties

here in the Senate, just as the last budget was. Democrats and Republicans, on the 2017 budget, virtually ignored the President and his proposal. We got together, and we compromised. Not everyone got everything they wanted, but we produced a budget that America can be proud of and one that helps the middle class.

We have shown Democrats and Republicans, the House and Senate, can come together to compromise on appropriations in 2017. We should follow that same blueprint in 2018. We should ignore the President's budget which would devastate the middle class and instead work across the aisle to advance reasonable compromise legislation later this year.

I yield the floor to my good friend from Texas.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I came to the floor during the last part of the remarks of the distinguished Democratic leader, and it just reminded me of a headline I saw in this morning's newspaper that just, to me, exemplifies how dishonest, sometimes, the way questions are framed here when it comes to dealing with our financial responsibilities. The headline in the Washington Post talked about President Trump's proposal slashing Medicaid, like the Democrats have criticized the House healthcare replacement bill slashing Medicaid even though, as a factual matter, Medicaid would continue to grow year after year after year.

As the distinguished Presiding Officer and I have previously discussed, one question is, What is a responsible rate of Consumer Price Index or inflation to deal with medical inflation so that when we return Medicaid to the States, spending at let's say 2016 levels, what is a responsible rate of continued growth to deal with medical inflation so that the States are not left with an unsustainable burden?

But the idea that spending at current levels, plus an additional cost-of-living index year after year after year, means that Medicaid spending won't go up every year—next year it will be more than this year. The following year it will be more than next year. So only in the fevered imagination of, apparently, the headline writers at the Washington Post and in some of our Democratic friends could that be considered a cut. In the rest of the country, they would consider that as Medicaid growing, not being cut.

It is true that one of the things the House did that I think is an important reform of one of our principle entitlement provisions was to put some sort of sustainable cap on the growth of spending on entitlements, which perviously had been uncapped.

Some day there is going to be a day of reckoning in this country when it comes to spending. We have \$20 trillion in debt. We know now that the Federal Reserve is loosening its hold on inter-

est rates, that those are creeping up, and one of the estimates is that if interest rates due to improved economic performance were to reach historic norms, we would soon be paying more for interest on the national debt than we would be paying for defense spending. That is simply unsustainable, not to mention the fact that we would then be essentially appropriating 30 percent of what the Federal Government spends and leaving 70 percent untouched.

We can't get the country on a sustainable financial path just dealing with 30 percent of what the Federal Government spends, and we need to have a serious conversation, not a misleading characterization of the problem. We need a serious conversation about the reality facing our country and future generations because right now we are spending their inheritance, so to speak. In other words, I consider it an act of immorality for me to be spending money and forcing my children and future generations to pay it back. That is just not fair to them, and we need to come to grips with that sooner rather than later.

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. President, on another note, last week, the administration sent official notice to Congress of its intent to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA. It was a big part of President Trump's campaign platform that the United States needed smarter, fairer trade deals that benefit more Americans. I certainly agree with that principle.

I do think, in some quarters, NAFTA has been unfairly maligned. But it is true that it is 23 years old, and it needs to be modernized. I think all of us can rally around that, consistent with the principle in President Trump's campaign that America needs smarter, fairer trade deals that benefit more Americans.

Free trade has, after all, been a boon to the American economy—and certainly the Texas economy because we are the No. 1 exporting State in the Nation. Our farmers, ranchers, and small business owners have benefited from trade agreements, particularly NAFTA, that help them send more of the products they raise, grow, and build to more markets around the world, principally to Canada and Mexico; but certainly, other trade agreements allow those manufactured goods, stock raised, and produce grown to go to markets around the world.

We comprise in America about 5 percent of the potential markets in the world, so 95 percent is the rest of the world and a market to buy the things we make and grow and raise here. Why not help create more jobs and a stronger economy here at home by encouraging that kind of free and fair trade?

There has been significant growth in exports since NAFTA was agreed to 23 years ago. Of course, Mexico continues to be an important economic partner, helping my State, Texas, grow and spe-

cifically creating a vibrant ecosystem along the border, but the rest of the country benefits too.

The national Chamber of Commerce estimates that there are 5 million American jobs as a result of binational trade with Mexico. With Canada, it is about 8 million. Why in the world would we want to do anything to jeopardize that? I suggest we don't.

Free trade doesn't just mean more opportunities for our agricultural sector or business owners, but it also helps American families buy more affordable products here at home, too, and that is why we need to make sure that any changes to NAFTA are improvements to the overall agreement.

I was encouraged just this last week when Ambassador Lighthizer, the U.S. Trade Representative, and Secretary of Commerce Ross met with members of the Senate Finance Committee. Essentially, what they said is that their first principle, when it comes to renegotiating NAFTA, is to do no harm. That is a pretty good rule of thumb. In fact, it reminds me of the Hippocratic Oath that doctors take when treating patients: First, do no harm. Well, I believe that is a good place to start.

Over the last two decades under this agreement, the economy in my State of Texas—which has been the engine that has been pulling the national economy in many respects—has grown significantly because of the tremendous access afforded by trade. We have to be careful not to do any harm to that and to look for ways to improve it.

There is no denying that this agreement is an old one created well before the digital and global economy of today. It was written before the energy renaissance in North America occurred, whereby instead of peak energy production—which is what we thought we had reached—we now have so much natural gas and oil that we export it to the world. That is great for jobs here at home. It is great to be able to do that for our allies around the world who need a dependable, alternative supply of energy in many respects, rather than being the victims of energy being used as a weapon against them. So the energy renaissance is another good reason that updating NAFTA makes sense.

I look forward to working with the President and his team to take great care that any efforts to modernize NAFTA don't sacrifice the benefits we have enjoyed for the last two decades. Hopefully, we can modernize it in a way that will allow more Americans to take advantage of it, and our economy will continue to grow and prosper as a result.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. President, on another matter, as we all know, this Chamber continues to consider the best way forward to repeal and replace ObamaCare. The entire Republican Conference, all 52 of us, have been meeting regularly in small groups and larger groups so we can finally put ObamaCare behind us. I have to say it is a shame that none of our Democratic