

repeal the Affordable Care Act and the Trump administration's refusal to guarantee to continue making cost-sharing payments is causing the instability in the market.

Here is what the report says. Now, this is the report put out by the Republican-appointed head of the CBO. So this is not some Democratic propaganda-type document. These are "just the facts, ma'am," as Mr. Friday said. Here is what the report says: "Substantial uncertainty about the enforcement of the individual mandate and about future payments of the cost-sharing subsidies" have led insurers to withdraw from the current marketplace.

AHIP—that is the biggest organization of our Nation's insurers, the insurance companies; they are non-partisan—said the same thing.

Why, if our colleagues want more people to stay in the market and are complaining that people are leaving the market, don't we come together—hopefully, with the President, who thinks that he could do this on his own—and say: We are going to make this cost-sharing permanent. We all know insurers want certainty in the future or they pull out. That is what the insurance business is all about. Yet, grudgingly, one little step at a time, they don't take away the cost-sharing because they know the damage it would do—this is President Trump—but they are afraid to make it permanent and that causes problems.

So there is only one word for what the President is doing and our Republican colleagues are doing when it comes to the present healthcare system—sabotage. If our Republican friends continue to allow the President to play coy about these cost-sharing payments—which bring premiums down, which bring costs for average citizens down—as a potential threat, if we don't make cost sharing permanent, the system will deteriorate. Again, it will be on the President's back, on our colleagues' backs. I hate to say that, but those are the facts.

We want to make it permanent. We tried to put it in the appropriations bill, to make it permanent, which would have kept costs low or kept people in the exchanges. Our colleagues said no.

Finally, as to preexisting conditions, the CBO report states:

People who are less healthy would ultimately be unable to purchase comprehensive non-group health insurance at premiums comparable to those under current law, if they could purchase it at all.

Let me repeat the last part of the CBO report written by an appointee of our Republican head of HHS: "if they could purchase it at all." Think about that for a minute.

Under TrumpCare, if you have a pre-existing condition, if you are sick, your health insurance costs could go up so high that you can't afford insurance. Before the new healthcare law passed under President Obama, how many of us heard from families: My daughter

has cancer, but the insurance company won't cover me, or I got kicked off and I have to watch her suffer because I can't afford the treatment, the payments. It is horrible, heart-wrenching. It is going back to those days under this bill, unfortunately.

This report ought to be the final nail in the coffin of the Republican effort to sabotage our healthcare system. It will make much more certain that sick people are priced out of insurance companies, that the most vulnerable are left high and dry when they need care the most, when there is an illness in the family.

Is that the sort of healthcare system our colleagues envision for this country? When you are sick, when one of your family members is sick, is that when they are not allowed to give you healthcare? What in the heck do you have it for?

I certainly hope that is not the idea on the other side of the aisle, but this bill that the House passed would do it.

In conclusion, the nonpartisan scorekeepers have spoken loudly and clearly—no ambiguity. TrumpCare means higher costs and less care for the American people, the average American. Let's not lose sight of what is at stake here. The health and well-being of the American people is on the line. There are life-and-death consequences for so many millions of people. They are relying on us to get this right.

So for the good of the country, President Trump and our Republican colleagues should abandon TrumpCare, stop sabotaging the healthcare system, and work with Democrats—we are waiting—to fix our healthcare system, not pull it from under them.

MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. President, finally, I have one more note. It is Memorial Day. I want to take a moment to express my deep and abiding gratitude for the men and women in our armed services who gave their last full measure of devotion in defense of our Nation and our liberty.

In big cities and small towns throughout America and in my home State of New York, we will honor our fallen veterans and pay tribute to them. We will give a hug to the Gold Star moms who have made the ultimate sacrifice. May we never forget their sacrifice so that we may enjoy the blessings of freedom.

Since the founding of this country, since the farmers on Bunker Hill put down their plows and took up muskets, Americans have been willing to make that ultimate sacrifice for our great way of life, our freedom. May we never forget them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from Connecticut.

RUSSIAN INVESTIGATION

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I join my colleague from New York in expressing the special respect and passion that we all feel in honoring this great holiday that remembers the service and sacrifice of great Americans, to

make sure we sustain and preserve and enhance our democracy. Part of that democracy is indeed the rule of law, as well as protecting the institutions that make us great as a Nation, including our elections system and its integrity.

Today should also be a time to observe and commemorate the continued respect for the law that makes us great. Part of that respect was demonstrated recently when the Deputy Attorney General appointed a special counsel to investigate possible coordination between the Trump administration and the Presidential campaign with the Russians as they interfered with those democratic institutions. Make no mistake, there is consensus and unanimity in the intelligence community, and more broadly among us in this body, that the Russians purposefully and relentlessly interfered in the 2016 election through a cyber attack on this Nation. In my view, it was an act of cyber warfare.

The questions now are who and how in the Trump team may have colluded with the Russians in that illegal, outrageous activity and, indeed, whether there has been obstruction of justice since then. Mounting evidence indicates that there has been.

I have joined many of my colleagues in praising the appointment of a special prosecutor because it is vitally necessary for a fair and impartial, as well as aggressive, investigation. The special prosecutor must follow the evidence wherever it leads, and I have confidence that Bob Mueller is the right person for this assignment. He has the grit and backbone to stand up to pressure. He has the prosecutorial experience and expertise to conduct a truly professional investigation.

I called for a special prosecutor back in February. I was one of the first, if not the first, among our colleagues to do so because the conflicts of interest raised by the recusal of the Attorney General and the potential involvement of the Deputy led me to think that such an appointment was absolutely necessary.

I now call on the President to support this investigation. With the utmost respect for the Office of the President, it should be unnecessary to call for that cooperation and support. My hope was that the President would say as soon as the appointment occurred that he would indeed cooperate. But, instead, he has continued to characterize this investigation as a witch hunt and a charade. He has demeaned and disrespected it and indicated that, if anything, there will be less than full cooperation. That would be a grave disservice to our democracy and to the American people.

The integrity of our electoral system is bigger and more important than any single electoral contest or even any occupant of the White House. It is about the freedom and independence of this Nation, something we cherish and celebrate on this Memorial Day weekend.

I urge President Trump to demonstrate his adherence to the rule of

law by cooperating and articulating fully his cooperation with this investigation. I hope that not only President Trump but all of his associates will do so and that they will provide whatever testimony and documents are necessary to complete this investigation as quickly and effectively as possible.

I also believe that the Attorney General of the United States owes the American people his adherence to the rule of law by committing himself to follow the guidelines that respect the press. Indeed, we would know very little, if anything, about many of the events that prompted the appointment of a special prosecutor without the free press reporting development after event after development that have led to this day.

There are guidelines and regulations that protect the President against any kind of compulsory process or punishment. If there is punishment to be accorded to lawbreakers, the press should be recognized for the special role they have in our democracy and the special protections, the constitutional guarantee they enjoy under the First Amendment. There are guidelines under 28 CFR 50.10 that provide legal guidance and regulations that should be observed, and I hope that the Attorney General will demonstrate in deed and word his adherence to those guidelines rather than threatening to lock up reporters—as the President has unfortunately done currently in conversations with Director Comey—or punishing them.

Whatever the violations of government officials may be, there should be an articulate, clear, and explicit adherence to those regulations by the Attorney General.

Let's take a moment to go through where we are right now.

Last July, after a disturbing series of reports suggesting the attempt by a foreign power to influence an American election, the Federal Government began to investigate the Russian Government's interference in the Presidential election.

We learned just yesterday from a published report that this activity included conversations among Russian officials regarding how best to sway individual Trump officials and that the FBI's early handling of this matter may have been influenced by an unreliable document traceable to Russian intelligence—a form of interference in our justice system that is stunning.

In December of 2016, U.S. intelligence officials concluded that the Russians had orchestrated the theft of electronic materials from the Democratic National Committee and John Podesta in an attempt to undermine Hillary Clinton's Presidential campaign. The Obama administration responded by implementing sanctions on the Russian Government.

Shortly after President Trump took office, Attorney General Sally Yates warned the White House that National

Security Adviser Michael Flynn had lied to officials about discussing sanctions with the Russians and was vulnerable to Russian blackmail. The White House waited 2½ weeks to take action and did so only after a March 9 Washington Post report and, in fact, days after Sally Yates' warning, fired her.

We also know that Director Comey was warned or asked—in fact, demanded by President Trump that he pledge his loyalty and that he would be in jeopardy of losing his job if he did not. Shortly thereafter, the President clearly expressed to Director Comey his sense of that warning when he asked Director Comey to shut down, in effect, the Flynn investigation. As we all know, Director Comey resisted both of the President's requests.

In early March, following sharp criticism about his failure to disclose meetings with Russian officials under oath, Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused himself from the Department of Justice investigations.

Later that month, President Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, became the third high-ranking Trump administration official caught misrepresenting potentially his ties to an admitted meeting with Russian officials from his security clearance application.

On May 9, President Trump fired FBI Director James Comey, a stunning event amidst these unprecedented revelations. After clumsy and contradicting explanations seeking to advance a false narrative that the firing was a result of Director Comey's handling of the Hillary Clinton email matter, the White House essentially abandoned that conflicting series of stories, and President Trump admitted publicly that he was thinking about the FBI's Russia investigation when he decided to fire Comey. He boasted the next day in his meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister that he felt greatly relieved of pressure resulting from that investigation.

The New York Times has reported that Comey was seeking increased funding and resources to expand the Russia probe. The Times also subsequently revealed that Director Comey had discussed with others and wrote memos detailing how President Trump asked him to pledge his loyalty and shut down the Federal investigation into Mr. Flynn.

We must wait for all the facts to emerge, but even if only some of these reports are accurate, the conclusion is almost inescapable that the President of the United States fired the FBI Director in an attempt to shut down the investigation into ties between his associates, including Michael Flynn, and the Russian Government. The names of these associates have been well documented—Paul Manafort, Roger Stone, Carter Page, as well as Michael Flynn.

There is, unfortunately, more. Just in the past few days, additional disturbing facts and press reports have surfaced, including testimony by

former CIA Director John Brennan before the House Intelligence Committee. He said that before he left office, he became deeply concerned that Russian intelligence services were attempting to manipulate Trump associates to influence the Presidential campaign. He noted that many Russian contacts of individuals linked to the Trump campaign emerged in those reports. The Washington Post reported that Comey had informed Congress about the FBI Russia investigation late in March and that Trump had asked Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats and National Security Director Michael Rogers to push back on that investigation—in effect, to clear the President—and deny Trump campaign collusion with the Russians. According to this report, both officials, to their credit, refused to do so.

In the Armed Services Committee, I asked Director Coats whether he discussed with Director Rogers any attempts by the administration to interfere with the investigation. He refused to answer—a pause and silence that spoke volumes.

Revelation after revelation shakes our confidence in this administration's truthfulness and confidence. This investigation by the special prosecutor is vitally necessary.

We must not lose sight of the damage that has already been done. These reports paint a deeply disturbing picture of possible obstruction, a mosaic pieced together by facts that show not only events and conversations but also motives. After a series of these events and conversations, they can no longer be seen as isolated or accidental or inadvertent. The cumulative effect, like threads in a fabric, is to establish a picture of motive, intent, mens rea, and criminal activity.

Special Counsel Mueller must have the mandate and all of the funding and resources that he needs to follow the facts wherever they may lead—resources, independence—but also support.

That is why, again, I call on the administration to express its support and its intention to cooperate.

This kind of investigation can mean the difference between the upholding of our democratic institutions and placing them in jeopardy. Therefore, I urge that we as a body remain vigilant and continue the Judiciary Committee's oversight, inquiry, and investigative activity so as to assure that we know the reasons then-FBI Director Comey was fired—we have that responsibility as a matter of oversight—and continue that kind of scrutiny in order to assure the independence and resources the special prosecutor needs. Likewise, the Intelligence Committee's activities are absolutely necessary.

Almost certainly, the special prosecutor will produce no report or elaborate public explanation. He will bring criminal charges if they are warranted by the evidence. He will seek convictions in court if those prosecutions are

justified under his finding. A report with recommendations and finding as to how we can avoid this kind of interference with our democratic institutions in the future must be the work of the Intelligence Committee and of an independent commission, which I have supported. An independent, bipartisan commission can do the kind of public, transparent, vigorous, and independent work that is necessary, just in the way that we have done in the wake of other crises.

I urge that we proceed on all of these fronts. They are vital to our democracy. They are an essential, inextricable part of freedom, the rule of law, and freedom of the press.

I hope that the press will continue its unfettered use of its First Amendment freedom to give us the truth and to continue those reports that have brought us to this day, because the truth will be uncovered in the course of the criminal process. It will be uncovered by the Intelligence Committee and, hopefully, by an independent commission. The essential role of the free press in fostering government accountability is recognized by existing regulations, and the Attorney General of the United States should leave no confusion that the Department of Justice will adhere to those regulations.

Indeed, 28 CFR 50.10 recognizes the “essential role of the free press in fostering government accountability” and, therefore, sets parameters and procedures, for approval by the Attorney General of the United States, under standards that are set forth for any government action that may, in any way, inhibit or impede the press.

We will probably never know the real impact of Russia’s intervention in the outcome of the 2016 election. These investigations are not about assessing the impact. They are about determining who participated criminally with the Russians in that interference. The American people deserve a thorough and impartial investigation into the Trump team’s ties to that interference and the effort by President Trump and others to cover it up.

In the wake of Watergate, the saying arose that the coverup was worse than the crime. It was then, and it would be worse—or at least as heinous—in the crime here. Make no mistake that the crime is, actually, a theft of our democracy—an interference by the Russians in our democratic institutions—which they will repeat if we do not make them pay a price and, likewise, if we do not make the Americans who cooperated with them pay a price as well. This principle is central to our democracy and our rule of law.

In closing, I urge my colleagues to join me in calling for the cooperation of the Trump administration as well as for recognizing the importance of the investigation—its independence, its resources—for the free press and the rule of law.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

OPIOID CRISIS

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I join my colleagues in speaking about the opioid crisis that has devastated families in States across the country.

I thank my colleague, Senator MANCHIN, for organizing the speeches today.

In my State, deaths from prescription drug abuse have now claimed the lives of more Minnesotans than have homicides or car crashes. We lost our beloved Prince because of an opioid overdose, which is still being investigated. Just as importantly, we lost a student in Duluth and a mom in Rochester, MN—over 400 people in just the last year. We continue to see dangerous synthetic opioids shipped across our borders in increasing amounts—a trend that the U.S. Customs and Border Protection expects to continue, as we heard in a Judiciary Committee hearing last week.

Today, I joined Senator PORTMAN in his subcommittee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, and we talked about what is going on from that perspective as well.

While there is more work to do to combat this epidemic, first, I recognize that we have made some meaningful progress on a bipartisan basis. We passed the CARA Act, which is something that was led by Senators PORTMAN, WHITEHOUSE, AYOTTE, and me. We set a framework up for the Nation, and I look at it in three ways.

The first way is that we have to do everything we can to prevent addiction. That means changing some of our prescription practices across the country. Do you really need 30 pills when you get your wisdom teeth out? It is about asking those questions and changing those practices.

The second thing would be to look at prescription drug monitoring. Senator PORTMAN and I have a bill that would make it mandatory for States to share their data across State borders. I found a guy in Moorhead, MN, through his rehab counselor, who had 108 different prescriptions for opioids from something like 80 different doctors in 50 different cities. He went from North Dakota to South Dakota, to Minnesota, to Wisconsin. That is why sharing that data would greatly reduce that doctor shopping.

I see here the Senator from Texas, Mr. CORNYN. Senator CORNYN and I led a bill years ago to make it easier for people to throw away their leftover prescription drugs so they would not get in the hands of those who should not be taking them. Those are ideas for reducing that demand.

Then you go to the next area, which, of course, is that of trying to reduce the illegal drugs from coming in, like with the STOP Act, which Senator PORTMAN and I introduced, making it harder to get these drugs in through the Postal Service, and doing more with law enforcement. By passing the SALTS Act, which is a bill that Senator GRAHAM and I introduced, it will

make it easier for prosecutors—the Presiding Officer is a former prosecutor—to prove up cases with analogue drugs, which is when perpetrators basically take a substance, change it a little, and then say: Hey, it is a new drug. Then it makes it harder for the Feds to go after it, and you have to prove it up in court.

So we are making some changes to our law to make it easier, especially in rural areas, where they are not going to be able to get a medical doctor in to prove up what the substance is in order to make it easier to prove these cases.

These are all very good ideas, but what we are here to talk about today is the issue of the funding and what will happen if we do not have the funding for treatment. We did a good job with the Cures Act last December, in which we made \$1 billion available over 2 years, as well as the work that was done on a bipartisan basis with the budget for the rest of the year. I consider those good signs.

Unfortunately, the budget and the CBO score of the healthcare repeal bill that was released this week—the bill that came over from the House—shows us that we are at risk of working backwards on this issue.

According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, mental health and substance abuse benefits could be cut under the healthcare bill, which would increase out-of-pocket costs by thousands of dollars for those who need these vital services. This is on top of the \$839 billion in cuts to Medicaid under the bill and additional cuts in the President’s budget of more than \$600 billion to Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, even though these programs cover 3 out of every 10 people who have an opioid addiction. This would be devastating for so many, if these budget cuts took effect.

I would like to do more. I would, actually, like to pass the LifeBOAT Act, which Senator MANCHIN introduced and I am a cosponsor. That would simply put an extra fee on some of these opioids so that the people who have been reaping the profits from these drugs would be helping to pay for the treatment. I think that is a great idea. Unfortunately, this budget takes us the other way.

It eliminates programs that help rural communities build hospitals and get access to vital telemedicine services. It cuts critical medical research that is happening at the NIH—just when, at the end of last year, we added that money to the NIH’s funding. It was shown just in the last month that, with the budget for the rest of the year, we have continued that positive trend. The budget also doubles down on other cuts that would hurt small towns and rural communities, which would impact jobs and opportunities. It eliminates rural business programs, which have helped to create hundreds of thousands of jobs. It cuts rural housing programs and infrastructure grants and loan programs.