

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

SANCTIONS LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first on Iran and Russia: This week we will be considering bipartisan legislation to impose sanctions on Iran for its ballistic missile testing, for its human rights abuses, and for its overt support of terrorism. I support this and look forward to a vote on the measure. It is important we do it.

I also understand that the majority leader will consent to an amendment vote alongside that bill on bipartisan Russia sanctions legislation. There is a broad bipartisan consensus for moving forward on tough sanctions against Russia. Russia defied the sovereignty of the Ukraine with the annexation of Crimea. It has been accused of human rights abuses including propping up the brutal Assad regime in Syria, and of course the intelligence community has confirmed that Russia interfered with our democracy.

I appreciate that the majority leader has committed to having a vote on Russia sanctions, and I thank so many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle for pushing this issue. It is the right thing to do, and I appreciate them doing it.

I strongly believe that Russia's sanctions legislation needs to do three important things. First, we must codify existing sanctions on Russia; second, we need to give Congress a chance to review any decision by this administration before sanctions are lifted; and, third, we need to impose tough, new sanctions on Russia for its attack on our democracy.

Two pieces of legislation, one posted by the two lead sponsors, Senators MCCAIN and CARDIN, the other by Senators GRAHAM and CARDIN—both bipartisan and both, I believe, with at least 10 cosponsors from each side of the aisle—do these things. What we have suggested to the leader is that we put those two bills together and combine them, tweak them a little bit, and move forward. We await the answer from the majority leader on our proposal.

It is certainly our responsibility and the responsibility of this Congress to vote on the tough Russia sanctions bill

as a response to Russia's persistent violations of international norms and agreements.

If we do nothing on Russia or if we have a weak bill, we will not accomplish that goal, and Mr. Putin will continue to do everything he is doing. We know sanctions have bite with Russia. If the Russians see that this Congress, in a bipartisan way, is resolute and strong, it will make a difference, and I hope we move forward.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, there are many subjects in this very quickly changing world in which we live. The next subject is infrastructure.

Today, President Trump will continue his infrastructure week in talking about inland waterways. I would like to repeat that Democrats welcome a discussion about these issues. Democrats have argued in favor of a large infrastructure package to address our crumbling roads and bridges, our levees, our dams, our ports, and our locks for a long time. While we disagreed with President Trump on a great many things during the campaign, I think many of my colleagues thought that when Mr. Trump was elected, we could find some common ground on the topic of infrastructure.

Needless to say, so far, the President's actions on infrastructure have been a disappointment. In 6 months, the President has not given any real details about his infrastructure plan. The most he has done is endorse an off-the-shelf plan to privatize air traffic control. In fact, he actually cut infrastructure spending in his budget by over \$200 billion. Now, during what they have termed "infrastructure week," the White House has only proposed to privatize much of our infrastructure.

Today, I expect more of the same—bold promises, few details. What details we do hear will likely be about how large financiers should decide where and how to build American infrastructure. That has never happened before. The approach will not address the very broad infrastructure needs we have. Financiers will not pay to finance infrastructure projects from which they cannot make a buck. It is their right to seek a profit—that is what businesses do and are supposed to do—but there is no such thing as a free lunch. They are going to need to get recompense when they lay out money. That kind of approach will not fix our water sewer systems. It will not expand rural broadband. It will not fix our energy grid. It will do one thing—lead to Trump tolls from one end of America to the other.

After the election, we stood ready to work with the President on a real bill, provided it would not be just tax breaks for private financiers or roll back labor and environmental protections. We even wrote a detailed blueprint on how to spend \$1 trillion. That

was the President's number. It would create 13 to 15 million jobs. It would rebuild our infrastructure—large parts of it—from one end of America to the other. It would not leave out rural areas that will never benefit from any kind of private financing, as Senators BARRASSO and MORAN have made clear.

We sent it to the White House and never heard a peep. I have talked to the President several times on the phone and said that I want to work with him on infrastructure—no response. Now we have their plan without any consultation from Democrats. Even with talk that they should do this on reconciliation, there has been no Democratic support or votes or input. Just as their doing things by reconciliation is tying the Republican Party in knots on healthcare, it does not bode too well for them on tax reform. It will mess up infrastructure as well.

So I hope the President drops his go-at-it-alone infrastructure push and instead decides to sit down and talk to Democrats about the issue. We agree wholeheartedly on the problem and its magnitude. Let's sit down and start talking about what solutions actually make sense. Let's not have a few financiers who whisper into the President's ear determine our infrastructure policy—because it will be a flop.

TRUMPCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, on another matter: healthcare.

Yesterday, the insurer Anthem pulled out of exchanges in Ohio, citing the administration's decision to hold cost-sharing reduction payments hostage as the reason for its exit. Anthem joins a growing list of health insurers that have chosen to leave the 2018 marketplace or considered raising their rates as a result of the uncertainty the President and Republicans are causing—deliberately, in my judgment—in our healthcare system.

The President and Republicans blame ObamaCare for insurers leaving the marketplace. It is simply not true. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said it is the "substantial uncertainty about enforcement of the individual mandate and about future payments of the cost-sharing subsidies" that have led insurers to withdraw from the current marketplace. AHIP, which is hardly a Democratic group—it is the largest trade group of insurers and is completely nonpartisan—said the uncertainty about cost-sharing payments was "the single most destabilizing factor in the individual market."

The Affordable Care Act is not falling under its own weight. It is being sabotaged deliberately by President Trump and Republicans who have been whipping up all of this uncertainty to gain political advantage, to say: "I told you so." They are hurting millions of people. That is really wrong.

After downplaying weeks of expectations in moving forward, yesterday our

Republican colleagues said they expect to have a repeal bill passed by June 30. That is 23 days from today. From all reports, the efforts by Republican Senators to craft a different TrumpCare will be based on many of the provisions in the House bill—a bill that would remove the guarantee of coverage for preexisting conditions, raise rates on some older Americans by as much as 800 percent, and decimate Medicaid, which so helps rural folks, folks with a family member in a nursing home, and those suffering from opioid abuse. It would also leave 23 million more Americans without health insurance.

I remind all of my colleagues on the other side that drafting a Senate Republican healthcare bill that is based on a House bill is putting lipstick on a pig. TrumpCare is fundamentally flawed, has been rejected overwhelmingly by the American people of all political stripes, and will devastate our healthcare system in order to finance massive tax breaks for the wealthiest of Americans. There is no amount of window dressing that can fix up a flawed concept.

I say to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that even if the proposal is 10 or 20 percent better than the House bill, it ain't close to being good enough for the American people. Republicans ought to drop the repeal. Choose to work with Democrats to actually improve our healthcare system, not to sabotage it.

BORDER WALL

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Mr. President, a word on the President's latest idea for a border wall with Mexico. After the idea of a border wall was roundly rejected in the last omnibus by Members of both parties and after no Republican from a border State area would support the border wall, the President just cannot seem to let it go. Yesterday, it was reported that he actually pitched the idea of a 40- or 50-foot-tall border wall with solar panels. Never mind that he still has not come up with a plan on how to build the wall, where to build it—on our side or the Rio Grande side—or how to get the land on the border from the private citizens who own it. Never mind that a border wall would be incredibly expensive and ineffective in actually preventing illegal border crossings. Never mind that Mexico still wouldn't be paying for the border wall or its solar panels.

The President is still pushing this medieval proposal—now with an absurd twist. Just like painting stripes on a pony doesn't make a zebra, solar panels on a wall no one wants doesn't make it any more attractive. If the President thinks his new idea will catch on in Congress, well, I have a 50-foot-tall wall made of solar panels I will sell to you.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

COUNTERING IRAN'S DESTABILIZING ACTIVITIES ACT OF 2017—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 722, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 110, S. 722, a bill to impose sanctions with respect to Iran in relation to Iran's ballistic missile program, support for acts of international terrorism, and violations of human rights, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I understand that we had originally scheduled for, in about 1 minute, a vote on cloture on the new Iran sanctions bill. I understand that the cloture vote has been delayed until early this afternoon.

This comes on the heels of an announcement of very sad news from Iran. I would certainly be among the first to note that some of the people in Iran, the Revolutionary Guard and some of their leadership, support terrorism. They wish ill for us and for our country.

That same country had elections about 2 weeks ago, and the results of those elections were surprising, even for me, but encouraging. The results of the election found that President Rouhani, one of the leaders of reform and one of the modern elements within that country, was reelected by a resounding majority—close to 60 percent of the vote. Although the Supreme Leader thought it would be a one-on-one race for the Presidency, in spite of that, Rouhani was reelected, and we congratulate him. There were a number of municipal elections across the country, most prominently in Tehran where the hard-line mayor of Tehran has been ousted, and moderate forces seem to have made real, encouraging progress from my perspective and I think the perspective of most Americans.

One of the things the Iranians do, which is troubling to me and I think to

others in this country, is continue to test ballistic missiles in what we believe is in violation of the United Nations' decision. Iranians are not violating the agreement that was entered into among five nations, including the United States and Iran, roughly 2 years ago in Iran's nuclear joint agreement. They are not violating that, but they are violating other U.N. sanctions.

So this revised sanctions bill, which was scheduled to be debated today and maybe voted on later this week—at least the start of the debate on whether they are going to proceed to the bill—has been delayed until this afternoon. I urge us to consider delaying further action on this Iran sanctions measure today or this week.

The term “adding insult to injury” comes to mind. I try to use the Golden Rule to figure out what I should do and how I should behave as a human being, and I think maybe we ought to consider the Golden Rule in this case as well. Iran is not necessarily our close friend. They are not our close ally. I think the potential is there for having a much better relationship as a young generation of Iranians grows up and eventually assumes the leadership of their country.

It is a country of 80 million people, over half of them under the age of 25. They had a revolution in 1979 and captured our Embassy. They held our people for a year or more until after the 1980 Presidential election. Our relations with Iran have been difficult since that time but more encouraging of late—again, a young country of 80 million people, more than half under the age of 25.

The younger generation there wants to have a good relationship with the rest of the world, a better relationship with the rest of the world, and certainly a better relationship with us. I have talked with a number of American leaders, including senior American leaders, who have been to Iran in recent years and were surprised by the warm welcome they received.

It reminds me very much of the warm welcome I received leading a congressional delegation to Vietnam in August of 1991 to find out what happened to thousands of MIAs. We were expecting to be met by suspicion and hostility, and we were warmly embraced at that time. Six of us—Democratic and Republican Congressmen—were there to present to the leadership of Vietnam on behalf of the George Herbert Walker Bush administration a roadmap to normalize relations if they would do a number of things to enable us to find out what happened to thousands of our MIAs. We presented that proposal. John Kerry and JOHN McCAIN worked very hard on the Senate side and at the same time in Southeast Asia as well. We ended up with normalized relations within a few years of our visit. One of the members of my delegation, Pete Peterson, became our first U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam.

I mention that today because of the hostility we felt toward Vietnam for