

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

many years during the war and after the war and the suspicion that they were holding thousands of our MIAs as POWs, which turned out not to be true. But our efforts, along with those of Senator MCCAIN, Senator Kerry, and others, ended up providing information about the missing and the closure we hoped for hundreds of families of Americans who had lost their loved ones in Vietnam and never recovered their remains—although some of their remains were recovered and returned to the families.

I mention it today because a year ago in Vietnam, with President Obama and Secretary Kerry, and at a time when the Vietnamese were announcing they were going to buy billions of dollars' worth of our Boeing aircraft—we are their top trading partner, and they were going to be an integral part of the Trans-Pacific Partnership that we negotiated, along with other nations. Sadly, that has gone away. I think one of the biggest mistakes of this Congress and the last was to let the trans-Pacific trade partnership die. But Vietnam was a key member of that.

It is kind of ironic to me that a nation with whom we fought in a war, where the names of 55,000 who died are at the Vietnam Memorial—not even 2 miles from where I am standing right now—yet, since the 1970s we have let bygones be bygones and have a much better relationship with Vietnam. They are still Communist, and they are still a one-party system, but they have high regard toward Americans.

Rather remarkably, we learned last April when we were there that they had two surveys done of the Vietnamese people this last year. One survey found that 85 percent of the people surveyed had favorable opinions of the United States, more than any other nation in the world. In the second survey, we learned that about 95 percent of the Vietnamese people had favorable opinions of the United States, more than any other nation on Earth.

Again, we are their top trading partner these days, and they are buying a lot of the products we manufacture and sell. If that relationship can change, I think there is reason to hope our relationship with Iran can change.

We have our pages here. If it were left to the generation the age of our pages or maybe their parents, it would be a brandnew day in Iran. But change is happening there.

The question is, on the heels of this attack by ISIS, with whom we have bitter differences and a hotly contested armed conflict—for us to somehow, on the heels of two attacks by ISIS in Iran, one on the Parliament and the other apparently on the mausoleum for the former Ayatollah, where a dozen or more people have been killed, 40-something wounded—does it make sense for us to take up the Iran sanctions bill today? I don't think so.

My reading of the Golden Rule, treating other people the way we want to be treated, would suggest this might not

be the right day to do this—next week, maybe; today, no. I call on our leadership to hit the pause button. There is not a need to rush on this.

The Iran sanctions bill, which is coming to us today, is a much more thoughtful approach than was originally contemplated by the Foreign Relations Committee. They have done a very nice job of improving what I thought was a badly flawed earlier effort. But this might be a good day to hit the pause button. Instead of rubbing salt into a wound, let's wait a few days and consider what to do. If we were in their shoes, I think we would appreciate that gesture. If we were in their shoes, I think the idea of their taking this kind of action or step against us on a day that we have been attacked by ISIS would not be well received. It would be badly received. So I think we ought to treat them the same way.

I think that is pretty much it. I appreciate the chance to come to the floor and say a few words. I call on leadership to delay this vote on cloture and to delay the vote on the underlying bill until next week. When we do the underlying bill on Iran sanctions, let's couple it with something that includes some of the very thoughtful work going on with respect to Russia, which really is creating mischief in this country—not just with elections but otherwise as well—and maybe do a package that includes both together. That might make a lot more sense, and the timing would be a lot better.

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. SANDERS. 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. SANDERS. Mr. President, I am strongly supportive of adding sanctions against Russia to the bill that is scheduled to come up this afternoon. As I think we all know, Russia actively worked to influence our 2016 Presidential election and continues to try to destabilize democracies around the world, including our own, and that is unacceptable.

At the same time, I have serious concerns about the sanctions on Iran contained in this bill. As we have heard from former Obama administration officials, including Secretary Kerry and Ambassador Sherman, these measures could undermine the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the very important nuclear agreement signed in 2015 between the United States, our P5+1 partners, and Iran. But above and beyond that, let us be aware and cognizant that earlier today, the people of Iran suffered a horrific terror attack in their capital, Tehran, in which 12 people were killed and many more were injured. The Islamic State has claimed credit for this attack.

At a time when tensions are extremely high in that part of the world, our goal must be to find ways to bring people together to reduce tensions rather than to exacerbate this very painful and dangerous situation. Let us also remember that the leaders of Iran immediately expressed condolences for the September 11 attacks against the United States and that hundreds of Iranians held a candlelight vigil.

It seems to me to be the right thing to do—on a day when Iran has been attacked by ISIS, by terrorism, now is not the time to go forward with legislation calling for sanctions against Iran. I would respectfully request that we delay our vote on this bill until next week. Let us tell the people of Iran that while we have serious disagreements with them on a number of issues, that today, when they are mourning, when they are dealing with the shock of a terrorist attack, today is not the day to go forward with this piece of legislation.

With that, I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SUL-LIVAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I come to the floor very briefly to make what, I hope, is a reasonable recommendation to my colleagues on both sides.

We are due to vote later today on moving forward on a piece of legislation that I support. Last week, we voted out of the Foreign Relations Committee a new sanctions bill against the Iranian regime for its continued movement toward a ballistic missile program that, ultimately, could threaten the security of the Middle East and could threaten the security of our sacred ally in the region, Israel. It also speaks to Iran's continued problematic human rights record and its support for terrorism in the region.

We should move forward on this piece of legislation, but I would recommend that we not do so today. There is reason to have this debate, but given the terrorist attack that occurred in Iran, given the fact that today we know that there are 12 dead and 40 wounded in 2 very coordinated attacks, my worry is that, literally, at the moment of grieving in Iran, this resolution would look as directed not at the regime, as it is, but at the Iranian people. It would seem intemperate and, ultimately, do more damage than good.

This is an important resolution to debate. We can find the time to get this done, but given the unfortunate timing—obviously, not intentional in our moving this forward this week—given the attacks that just occurred and for which ISIS has claimed responsibility, I would hope that we could find a way

to move this to another time. I think it is really important because, ultimately, it is in the United States' national security interest for the Iranian people to get their way, who are, broadly speaking, Western-oriented and who, broadly speaking, want a democratic, internationalist future.

In everything we do, we need to make it clear that we have deep disagreements with the Iranian regime—its rhetoric toward Israel, its inflaming of tensions, its funding of proxy wars in the region—and that our beef is not with the people of Iran. From time to time, that is a difficult distinction to make, but it is a very important distinction to make. By choosing to postpone this debate and this vote to another time, I think we will send an important message to the Iranian people that we want to give them the time to grieve and that we want to give them the time to understand the scope of this attack.

I do not think it comes at much of a cost or loss to us. It is important to remember that when we were attacked on September 11, there were vigils held throughout Iran. The regime itself was not sponsoring those, but the Iranian people did stand up and, in substantial numbers, displayed a common cause with the people of this country—again, another sign that this disagreement is not with the people of Iran but with the regime.

Despite my having some reservations about this piece of legislation—I do not endorse it wholeheartedly, but I am a supporter of it and will vote for it when it comes to the floor of the Senate—I would hope that the leadership on both sides of the aisle might find a path so as to give the people of Iran some grieving space, to make sure that we are not sending the wrong message with this vote this afternoon, and to find some time later this summer to take up a very, very important issue.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I rise today in strong support of the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act of 2017, but first I would like to offer my strongest condemnation of the terrorist attack allegedly carried out by ISIS this morning in Tehran, which claimed the lives of 12 people. Attacks on civilians in any corner of the world must be strongly condemned by the United States, and I offer my condolences to the people of Iran and the families who lost loved ones in this latest act of terror.

If anything, these events remind us that the entire Middle East is increas-

ingly under siege, and the United States and the entire international community must unite to confront terrorism and extremism in all of its forms. That means holding governments that continue to foment, fund, and encourage terrorism accountable.

While the people of Iran suffered a heinous attack today, the unfortunate reality is that the violence, volatility, and profound human suffering that imperils the Middle East are all too often linked back to the Government of Iran. Across the region, this regime continues to pursue policies that threaten the national security interests of the United States. It continues to support terrorism and exert influence through the growing power of proxy actors throughout the Levant and Yemen. Even as it continues to supply terrorists across the region with money, weapons, and resources, the people of Iran continue to suffer under an oppressive regime with absolutely no respect for basic human rights.

We all know the United States faces a multitude of threats at home and abroad, from Russia's cyber attack on our elections, to North Korea's continued belligerence, to new questions about America's leadership in the world. But even as Congress rightly remains focused on these challenges, we must not lose sight of Iran's ongoing, ever-growing efforts to exert more control, more power, and more influence throughout the Middle East. Whether we are talking about an adversary like Russia or Iran or an international challenge like climate change or the refugee crisis, we cannot let issues of such importance to our future be obscured by partisan politics, derailed by divisive tweets, or lost amid the revelations of our relentless 24-hour news cycle.

I have always believed politics must stop at the water's edge, and I know many of my colleagues share that principle. That is why there is such broad bipartisan support for the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act. I am pleased to have worked with Senators CORKER, CARDIN, and a number of other colleagues on legislation that has earned the support of nearly 60 cosponsors. We crafted this legislation by listening to an array of different voices with experience addressing Iran's destabilizing influence.

But let me be clear. This bill is not—*is not*—about Iran's nuclear program. This bill is not about the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. With the regime's tentacles reaching across the region—from its support of a Shia proxy network in Iraq, to its growing influence in Afghanistan, to its continued sponsorship of terrorist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas—we need a strategic approach, one that energizes our partners in the region and recognizes their capacity to counter Iran's behavior. That is exactly what the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act does.

Our legislation calls on the President of the United States to develop a re-

gional strategy to counter Iran's asymmetric and conventional threats across the Middle East. We know that Iran, for example, continues to develop sophisticated ballistic missile technologies. They aren't exactly hiding it. Just a few weeks ago, a semi-official news service for the Iranian Revolutionary Guard announced it had built a third underground facility dedicated to ballistic missiles. Iran continues to test launch missiles, some of which may be capable of reaching Europe or Israel—both critical allies of the United States. In fact, some of the missiles launched earlier this year had the words "Israel must be wiped off the Earth" etched on their sides. That is why S. 722 requires the President to impose sanctions on any person who knowingly engages and materially contributes in support of Iran's ballistic missiles program.

Some argue that imposing new sanctions on Iran violates the spirit of the JCPOA, but I would argue that actively building underground ballistic missile facilities does little to promote good will or the spirit of the JCPOA in the region.

Beyond its missile program, Iran remains actively engaged in importing and exporting small and conventional arms to terrorist proxies around the world and bad actors like North Korea. In January of this year, the outgoing United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, expressed concern that Iran might have violated an arms embargo by supplying weapons and missiles to Hezbollah. Yet, not all of Iran's violations make high-profile news. We know Iran has ramped up its supply of weapons to the Houthi rebels in Yemen and other proxies throughout the region. That is why this legislation imposes sanctions on any individual who knowingly engages in activity that materially contributes to the supply, sale, or transfer of arms as defined and established by U.N. standards.

Finally, when it comes to human rights, some try to paint a pretty picture of reform in Iran, but a closer look reveals chilling and deplorable human rights abuses. According to Human Rights Watch, by October of last year, Iran had executed more than 250 people—that is 1 person sent to death every day—and many were executed for nonviolent drug offenses. That is why our legislation expands the scope of violations eligible for sanctions, including those behind the extrajudicial killings of journalists and activists who seek to expose the oppression of the Iranian people.

Finally, this bill calls for a comprehensive report on Americans who suffer at the hands of the Iranian regime, including those who have been unjustly detained and those who have remained missing in Iran for more than a decade.

In short, this bill is a carefully crafted response to Iran's ongoing aggression in the Middle East.

Let me turn to a provision that continues to be misrepresented, and that

involves the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. The IRGC is officially responsible for Iran's internal security, with a ground force of about 100,000, but like many other quasi-military-political entities in undemocratic countries throughout the world, the IRGC holds enormous influence in Iran's economy and public affairs. On paper, the IRGC Quds Force is the lead supporter of Iran's terrorist networks around the world, and the United States has designated it as such, but the reality is, the IRGC exercises tremendous economic and political power throughout Iran. It pulls the regime's levers to fund and support terrorists in the Middle East and beyond. That is why our bill specifically calls for terrorism-related sanctions on the IRGC, but it does not—let me repeat—it does not, as some have claimed, label the IRGC a foreign terrorist organization. We heard the concerns of our military and intelligence community. Let me repeat. This bill does not label the IRGC as a foreign terrorist organization. What it does do is require the President to acknowledge the role the IRGC plays in supporting terrorism globally.

I know some of my colleagues have expressed concerns as well about whether this bill gives a green light to the administration's decidedly confrontational approach to Iran, but that is precisely why Congress must step up and define our strategy in the Middle East. We need to look at the big picture here. As the United States and our partners work to build democratic governance structures—promote tolerance across the region and protect civilians and refugees living under siege—Iran remains aligned with Russia and Syria, actively working to undermine U.S. security interests. Indeed, Putin, Assad, and the Ayatollah continue to take advantage of the strife that imperils the region. Meanwhile, the world continues to struggle with extremism, with mass migration, and with the largest humanitarian crisis since World War II.

With this administration unable to articulate a clear vision for American leadership in the world, the time is ripe for Congress to assert its influence in our foreign policy, to provide guidance and expertise, and to develop a framework for securing our interests in the Middle East.

Now is not the time for Congress to turn a blind eye to Iran's hostile behavior. Now is the time for all of us to demand nothing less than vigorous oversight, constant vigilance, and strict enforcement of our entire arsenal of diplomatic tools, including sanctions on Iran. That is our effort—outside of the nuclear proposal—to make it very clear that you cannot get a green light to do all of these things just because you signed on to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. I think it is important for us to send this message, and when the appropriate time comes for this vote, I urge my colleagues to support the measure.

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

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

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, for a number of years, we have been debating healthcare in this country. Clearly, our healthcare system had problems 8 years ago when they started to do healthcare reform. I saw that as a doctor practicing in Casper, WY.

Well, then Washington Democrats tried their solution. It is a solution that passed, and it is known as ObamaCare. Republicans said that it wouldn't work and have been proven right. ObamaCare is too costly. It is collapsing. It is interesting because yesterday, as we were having our policy lunch meetings—Republicans and Democrats—word came out that another one of the ObamaCare exchange companies, Anthem, this time in Ohio, was pulling out, leaving about 18 counties, if not more in Ohio, without anybody to sell insurance on the ObamaCare exchange.

ObamaCare actually hasn't solved the problems of America's healthcare system. In many ways, it has made matters worse. That is why the law has never really had the support of the American people and continues to be unpopular today. It is why more than 19 million people actually chose not to sign up for ObamaCare coverage at all, even in spite of financial incentives to do so and a fine or a tax if you didn't sign up. So they either paid the fine or they got an exemption.

The Democrats, when they come to the floor to talk about healthcare, refuse to talk about those 19 million people who have just said: We want nothing to do with ObamaCare. We are not going to sign up. Give us an exemption. Let us out.

They want to talk about people whom they actually have covered by pushing them into a broken Medicaid system, and that is about what has happened here. This expansion through the healthcare law and expanding Medicaid put many people into a broken healthcare system called Medicaid. It wasn't working well before ObamaCare, and it has gotten worse. The numbers out there, in terms of physicians taking care of patients, are about one-third—one out of three doctors will not take new Medicaid patients, so it is not a system that is working. It is not a solution, but Democrats put more people into that.

For people who didn't end up in Medicaid and who paid their premiums, those premiums have gone up significantly. They have doubled in most States, I think, across the board—up about 107 percent over the last 4 years.

Thus, the statistics that have come out from the Department of Health and Human Services recently are the statistics the Obama administration, as it left office, didn't want the American people to see—that rates have doubled across the country and, in some States, much, much higher than that.

In my home State of Wyoming, they were up actually higher than the national average has been. People are paying more and more. There were two companies, at one point, that were selling insurance on the ObamaCare exchange, both losing money. One lost so much that they are no longer in business. The other is still losing money and still selling on the exchange, but you wonder how long they will stay. Or will they do the sort of thing that Anthem had to do in Ohio and the sorts of things we have seen in the Presiding Officer's home State of Iowa and we have seen in Nebraska and we have seen across the board? Some Democrats say: This is a one-term correction; give it time. But it doesn't seem that it is going to be working that way.

There was an article in the paper here, in Washington's Roll Call, and the headline was—this was last week—“Insurers Seek Increases for Obamacare Premiums in Early Filings.” This is for next year. The article talks about how the insurance companies are starting to say how much they are going to need to charge people next year, which is much higher than it is this year. They are talking about an average increase of about 30 percent.

The average premium in the ObamaCare market in Wyoming right now is already more than \$7,000 a year for a family. So how much more can people take? That is why I continue to come to the floor and talk about what is the problem with the healthcare law—healthcare and the system. People under ObamaCare have seen their deductibles go up, their copays go up, and the choices that they have go down. This is the real problem when we talk about ObamaCare.

Then, of course, the other thing is taxes. There are at least 15 new or higher taxes under ObamaCare. So people aren't just paying higher premiums; they are paying higher taxes, which were supposed to help with the premiums, but it doesn't seem to be doing so for people all across the country.

The Congressional Budget Office has looked at this, and it said that Americans are going to pay more than \$28 billion over the next 10 years on just one tax on prescription drugs. Well, if we are trying to lower the cost of drugs and trying to lower the cost of care, putting a tax like this, as ObamaCare did on prescription drugs, just adds to the problem.

It has raised taxes all across the board. I don't want to go through each and every one of the taxes, but suffice it to say that when President Obama said he would put this program into place and it wouldn't cost a single

dime, he forgot the trillion dollars in new taxes that he added onto the backs of hard-working Americans. So we have had higher taxes, we have had higher premiums, we have had higher out-of-pocket costs from people—this huge tax burden.

What has happened is that we need to do a reform. The House has passed reform, and now in the Senate we are working on passing our own healthcare reform bill. We have been meeting three times a week up to over 5 hours a week for the last month and a half, going through piece by piece of all the different components of the healthcare law, trying to address the issues that are facing the American people, trying to lower the taxes that top the list of what we hear about at home in terms of trying to help people because they are paying more taxes, trying to work to deal with premiums.

I am really encouraged by the debate we have been having. I think we have been taking good steps in trying to address the issues the American public is seeing in terms of higher premiums and fewer choices.

I would like to work with the Democrats to solve these problems in a bipartisan way, to talk about how people can actually get healthcare in this country. But what have the Democrats done in response? Well, it is interesting because they want to go to a single-payer healthcare system. Some may deny it, but a majority of the Democrats in the House have cosponsored legislation to go to a single-payer healthcare plan. It is modeled, in some ways, after what you are seeing in California.

The California State Senate last week passed a bill, which seems to be the drift and the direction and maybe even the tip of the sphere of the Democratic Party efforts. It said: We want single-payer healthcare in California.

I served in the Wyoming State Senate, and I know the Presiding Officer served in the State legislative body in her home State of Iowa. We do a fiscal note. We say: What is this going to cost? Is it a good idea? Can we afford it? What are the costs going to be? And the cost for what they proposed in California is \$400 billion. Can they afford it? What is the total budget of the State of California? What is their general fund for the year? It is only \$190 billion. So what they are proposing for healthcare alone is over twice what the entire general fund for the entire State of California is. Yet, it passed. It was a party-line vote in the State of California in the State senate, but that is now the position that they are working to do.

So it is hard to get cooperation from somebody to work on dealing with a healthcare plan when their plan is to go with more government, more spending, pledging money they don't have. When I looked at it in California, I said: If they want to do this, they will have to, No. 1, cut spending on other things. When you think about where

general funding goes, it is for teachers, law enforcement, public safety, and firefighters. But they would also have to raise taxes significantly to get the money for what they want to promise everybody in this single-payer healthcare plan.

I am interested in working in a bipartisan way with people, but it is hard to get cooperation from people when their solution is more government, higher taxes, and less freedom. We need a solution, and that is what we are working on. I am very happy to say that it has been discussed at length in our conference. We had another good meeting about it yesterday, along with the Vice President, focusing on eliminating taxes, getting rid of the mandate that says that people must buy a government-approved product, giving people additional choices, and giving the States flexibility to make a number of these decisions.

I am from a State where agriculture plays a significant role, as is the Presiding Officer. I will be at our Wyoming stock growers' meeting on Friday when I am back home in the State. I was there a couple of years ago after ObamaCare passed, talking to people who had insurance that worked for them and worked for their families, but they lost it, not because they couldn't afford to pay for what they had but because what President Obama and the Democrats forced through in Congress said it wasn't good enough for them.

Under the mandate, as to what my friends and neighbors and folks around Wyoming have been saying was good enough for them and they could afford, President Obama said it wasn't good enough for them. Who is the better judge of what is good for a family in Iowa or Wyoming—President Obama and the Democrats or the family there in Iowa or Wyoming who is making the decision about what works best for them and their families? I am sure I am going to hear more about it at the stock growers' meeting on Friday, when I hear from families who say: What we had worked, but lost it because it wasn't allowed to be sold anymore. The President said it wasn't good enough for me. One woman said to me: Tell the President that I can make the decisions for myself. I don't need his help—referring to President Obama.

So we will continue to work toward the goal of making sure that we have people who can get the insurance and care they need from a doctor they choose at lower costs. That is what we needed with healthcare reform. That is what we didn't get with ObamaCare. We got higher costs and fewer choices. Across the board right now, it looks like in 7 out of 10 counties in this country, people are down to one or two choices—hardly a market. In many places it is a monopoly now. After the news that came out yesterday from Anthem in Ohio and some of the news that we see from Iowa and neighboring Nebraska, we are going to find that many places will find themselves with

no options available. Even with the subsidies that the Democrats had promised to help deal with the high premiums they have caused, there may be nobody to sell the insurance even when the subsidies are available.

So I come to the floor, as I do just about every week, to talk about the situation with the Obama healthcare law, the challenges the American people face, and our commitment to help provide relief and rescue the American people from what has happened to them under President Obama's healthcare law.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, the most important words in our Constitution are the first three—"We the People"—written in a beautiful script and written in a font size so that one can see it from across the room. They set out the mission statement for our Constitution, for our vision of government—not government of, by, and for the privileged and the powerful but government of, by, and for the people, as President Lincoln so eloquently summarized.

It is our responsibility as elected officials to look out for decisions that serve this mission of government of, by, and for the people, to fight in times of trouble for policies that provide a ladder of opportunity and a foundation for families to thrive. But at this very moment, a secret group of 13 Senators is devising a healthcare plan with the intention of bringing it to this floor with no public debate, no committee meeting, and no public notice. They want to just bring it to the floor, have a few hours of debate, and put it forward, even though it will affect millions of Americans. It probably will hurt millions of Americans, but the secret 13 want to craft this policy. And why in secret? Because they are plotting a plan that will hurt so many people, they don't want the public involved in the process. They don't want to hear from the citizens from rural America or urban America who are so concerned about the TrumpCare bill—the bill that will immediately destroy healthcare for 14 million Americans; the bill that will immediately undermine the solvency and success of our rural healthcare clinics and our rural hospitals; the bill that breaks every promise the President put forward on healthcare.

It breaks the promise that every person will be covered, breaks the promise that people with preexisting connections will get the same price as everyone else, breaks the promise that the

policies will be even better, higher quality. Instead, it guts the essential benefits. It breaks the promise that the insurance will be at a lower cost. In fact, for someone roughly 64 years of age earning about \$26,500, their healthcare bill would go from \$140 a month to \$1,200 a month—a sum that is clearly impossible to pay on an annual income of \$26,500. That is why it is being done in secret—because it involves broken promise after broken promise, destroying healthcare in every town and hamlet across America.

That is quite a contrast to the way ObamaCare was forged. ObamaCare had a yearlong debate. It proceeded to be in committee markup—that means with amendments being offered—in the HELP Committee for about 5 weeks, with television cameras rolling and 150 Republican amendments accepted during that process. Then the Finance Committee had its turn, and it had a very long markup, and it had dozens and dozens, if not 100 or more, Republican amendments adopted. The debate was all over the country. It was in the newspapers. It was in every forum. It was right there, square center, nothing hidden. But this is quite different. The majority leader today has started the rule XIV process, specifically intending to bypass those Senate committees and bring the TrumpCare bill to the Senate floor, completely bypassing government of, by, and for the people.

This is unacceptable. I think my colleagues know it is unacceptable, but they are hoping to do it so quickly and so fast that they will have a minimum of criticism across the country. There should be a maximum amount of criticism on the floor of the Senate. Every Senator who believes that this democracy—this democratic Republic—is one in which we do the people's work should see the light of day. The debate should see the light of day in the forging of the bill, as well as the final debate here on the floor.

We know another reason this bill—this replacement or addition or modification of the House bill—is being crafted in secret. That is because the very premise of it is to give a massive tax break to the wealthiest Americans, another promise broken in which Trump said that this would not be done. But there it is, TrumpCare out of the House, \$600 billion given away to the richest Americans while devastating healthcare for working Americans.

Has no one noticed that we have an incredible gap in income in this country, with massive numbers of people earning very little and a few at the top earning massive amounts? Has no one noticed that we have a huge wealth gap in this Nation, with those at the bottom having few, if any, savings and those at the top having billions upon billions? If we have noticed, then we should care that that is not a foundation for families to thrive. Indeed, it is something that is only made much worse in a bill that takes away the

foundation of healthcare—essentially, the quality of life for families across America—and, in turn, takes the savings and gives it to the wealthiest families.

There is a reason to hide this bill. There are a lot of reasons to hide this bill. But it is undemocratic to have this secret group developing this bill with an intention to bring it to the floor without a committee hearing, without public exposure.

Folks back home are very worried, and I would like to share a few of their stories.

Lynda of Talent, OR, who survived her battle with stomach cancer, thanks to the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion—Lynda's friend wrote to share her story. Lynda was a self-employed plumber, working hard to get her business off the ground, but she was diagnosed with stage IV stomach cancer. Lynda couldn't afford insurance, and she and her husband couldn't afford to pay for treatment out of pocket because they were already paying off enormous debt from care her husband had received.

So what did Lynda do? She ignored the symptoms. She tried to go about her life as best as she could. As her friend wrote, "She would have died rather than take on more debt that she was not sure she could pay." But that changed with the Affordable Care Act the day Lynda found out she would receive coverage under the Oregon Health Plan—Oregon's Medicaid expansion.

Now there is good news to share. Lynda received treatment. She has been cancer-free for almost a year, and her friend describes this as "nothing short of a miracle." ObamaCare, the Affordable Care Act, delivered a miracle to an individual who was planning just to die rather than get treatment and then could get treatment, thanks to Medicaid expansion, and is now in remission.

TrumpCare is being reworked in secret by 13 of my colleagues out of public sight. It wants to strip away that expansion of Medicaid, wants to rip away the chance for people like Lynda to receive lifesaving care.

Yvonne from Elmira, OR, sent a note to us about the high-risk pools that Republicans want to institute under TrumpCare. She says:

Before the ACA existed, I was in our state's high risk pool because no company would insure me because I had Asthma and had an ovary removed because of cysts.

The \$1500 deductible and \$550 per month was hard to pay and then it only covered 70%.

When I was severely injured in an accident and required reconstructive surgery I ended up bankrupt.

But then, 2 years ago, she qualified for the Oregon Health Plan. Now Yvonne has her medical needs covered at an affordable price and can't be denied coverage or charged a higher premium because of her preexisting conditions. Yvonne, like so many others, would suffer under the Republican plan

to strip away the protection for pre-existing conditions. She has had an accident, she has had an ovary removed, she has had asthma. It would be extraordinarily difficult for her to get insurance without the protection of everyone being in the same healthcare pool together. If she could get insurance—which is not at all clear—it would be at sky-high, unaffordable prices.

Bernard from Portland wrote to us. He said that an important thing that often gets lost in this whole debate over the future of the Affordable Care Act is the support it gives for Americans to innovate.

In 2011, Bernard in Portland chose to leave his job and pursue his passion of becoming a freelance artist. Here is what he said, in his words:

With my departure, I left behind the security of medical coverage. For two years, I was not covered by medical insurance, and fortunately nothing happened, but that is a gamble nobody should have to take. And it's a gamble that I could take being under 40 years old, and in relatively good health.

A person should not have to stay in a job they may not even like, and could be better filled by someone else, just for fear of not having medical coverage.

He is right. One of the powerful things that has occurred under ObamaCare is that individuals worked for firms and wanted to become entrepreneurs but were afraid to do so because of the loss of healthcare coverage, but now, either through the expansion of Medicaid or through the exchanges, they can acquire insurance without being part of a large company. That has unleashed entrepreneurship across the country. People are pursuing their dreams and contributing to the economy in all kinds of ways because they can now access healthcare without being part of a company that provides healthcare.

Eventually, Bernard was able to afford a basic coverage plan. But it didn't provide much, and it cost a significant portion of his income, but it all changed with the ACA.

An October 2016 survey of American small businesses and a January 2017 followup survey found that one-third of 5,400 small business owners interviewed had the confidence to start their own businesses because they had access to healthcare through the ACA. According to the Department of Labor, between 2013 when the ACA went into effect and the end of 2015, the number of self-employed Americans increased by 3.5 percent.

These are just different ways of noting what we hear about all the time—people launching their entrepreneurial efforts, launching their companies because of the confidence they have that they can get healthcare. That is the powerful unleashing of creativity. It is an economic engine. It is a small business driver.

Lisa from Phoenix also wrote to share her powerful story. Lisa's daughter suffers from cerebral palsy and epilepsy, so Lisa has stayed home and

cared for her for the last 15 years while her husband worked. Now, thanks to ACA's Medicaid expansion, her family has been able to hire in-home help and it has been transformative.

Lisa's daughter has become more connected to the community, gained new skills and independence, is contributing to household chores, and has shown a great deal more vitality and engagement since the family was able to get some assistance. It has gotten to the point where Lisa can start thinking about her own needs a bit more. In fact, for the first time in quite a while, she is considering taking on a job outside her home to help provide more income.

The ACA isn't just saving lives in emergency health situations or by addressing diseases. It is improving the quality of life for millions of American families like Lisa's.

I will share one more constituent story today. It is hard to pick just one more because there are so many stories coming in each and every day. As we continue to talk about the assault on the health and peace of mind of millions of Americans, I will be coming back to the floor to share those stories coming in from other Oregonians. But this last story comes from Warren in Tigard, OR.

Warren and his wife Joyce have been happily married for over 60 years, but in the last few years, Joyce has been suffering from Alzheimer's. Joyce's disease has progressed very far. Among other things, she has lost her mobility, much of her cognition, and she is wheelchair bound. Her condition has progressed so far that Warren and the home caregivers who were helping him care for his wife just couldn't meet the need requirements any longer, so they admitted Joyce to a nearby adult care facility, where she is now secure, stable, and comfortable. But, as we know, the kind of care Joyce is receiving is expensive. Warren writes:

This care costs \$4,000 per month. Our long-term care insurance is currently covering most of this cost, but only about 4 months' worth of insurance coverage remains. So we will have to obtain Medicaid coverage for her continued care.

But proposed changes to the Affordable Care Act could jeopardize this coverage. I have not anticipated this disastrous change, but fear it would be a tragedy for both of us.

Yes, it would be a tragedy for Warren and for Joyce to have TrumpCare pass and dismantle Medicaid and dismantle the exchanges. It would be a tragedy for so many others in similar situations across the country.

Many people don't realize that Medicaid helps pay for nursing home care for more than half of the nursing home residents—residents like Joyce. But here is TrumpCare, planning to cut \$880 billion in direct Medicaid spending. It is basically: Well, too bad Warren and too bad Joyce. We want to save some money so we can give big tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans.

I must say, there is not a lot of caring in that perspective. It embodies a

principle, but is it really the principle we want in the United States of America—the principle that the goal of the majority party is to take away from those who have little to give more to those who have most? Is that really the principle my Republican colleagues want to embrace on the floor of the Senate?

Is that really the principle the secret 13 with their secret meetings out of public sight to develop a new version of TrumpCare want to embrace? I would suggest that is simply wrong. It is wrong from the point of view of providing an opportunity for all Americans to thrive. It is wrong from a moral point of view to pull healthcare—and the peace of mind that comes with healthcare—out of the hands of struggling Americans and working Americans across our country.

Finally, I want to address one more issue. We heard earlier today that Anthem is pulling out of Ohio. Why are they pulling out? Because of President Trump. Why is that connected? Because he refuses to confirm that his administration will make the cost-sharing reduction payments that have been part of the Affordable Care Act. Those payments reduce the premiums. Those payments proceed also to reduce the level of deductibles so you get more care sooner. So insurance companies don't know whether to raise their insurance policy a little or a tremendous amount, and that instability means they simply can't price their policies.

In addition, my Republican colleagues have assaulted the risk quarters, or reinsurance programs, that make it possible for an insurance company to go into a new market and know that if they get a disproportionate share of sick patients, they will get compensated for that risk and that result. So that reinsurance is essential for more companies to be in a particular market.

Moreover, the administration proceeded to not spend the money on advertising in the last stage of signups and reduced the number of people who were in the markets. So that is another assault on the stability of health insurance in America. This is a deliberate, straight-out effort to undermine healthcare in America to the disadvantage of millions of Americans. It is being done by the President without any action even happening on TrumpCare here in the Senate. It is wrong. It is hurting a lot of people, and the President should stop.

With that, I conclude my comments.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask permission to speak under leadership time for a brief moment.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Mr. President.

With respect to the pending vote on the Iran sanctions bill, I want to be very clear. Democrats will vote to advance this bill to the floor because most of us support the bill but also because we expect an amendment process that will follow for a vote on a strong package of Russia sanctions. I have talked to the Republican leader about this. He is amenable to that.

Our Republican colleagues should realize it will be very difficult to gather Democratic support for final passage of this bill until we deal with Russia sanctions. We feel strongly that we need a tough, effective package of Russia sanctions to move alongside the Iran sanctions. We are currently negotiating to that end. I have faith that the majority leader and I, along with Chairman CORKER, Chairman CRAPO, Ranking Member CARDIN, and Ranking Member BROWN, will be able to agree on a way forward that allows for a final vote on Iran sanctions alongside a strong and effective package of Russia sanctions.

With that, I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the 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.

Todd Young, Joni Ernst, Bill Cassidy, Ron Johnson, Tom Cotton, Orrin G. Hatch, Roger F. Wicker, Pat Roberts, Mitch McConnell, Richard Burr, Luther Strange, James M. Inhofe, Mike Crapo, Shelley Moore Capito, John Cornyn, Bob Corker, John Barrasso.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to 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, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ).

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 91, nays 8, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 140 Leg.]

YEAS—91

Alexander	Gardner	Nelson
Baldwin	Graham	Perdue
Barrasso	Grassley	Peters
Bennet	Harris	Portman
Blumenthal	Hassan	Reed
Blunt	Hatch	Risch
Booker	Heinrich	Roberts
Boozman	Heitkamp	Rounds
Brown	Heller	Rubio
Burr	Hirono	Sasse
Cantwell	Hoeven	Schatz
Capito	Inhofe	Schumer
Cardin	Isakson	Scott
Casey	Johnson	Shaheen
Cassidy	Kaine	Shelby
Cochran	Kennedy	Stabenow
Collins	King	Strange
Coons	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Corker	Lankford	Tester
Cornyn	Leahy	Thune
Cortez Masto	Lee	Tillis
Cotton	Manchin	Toomey
Crapo	Markey	Van Hollen
Daines	McCain	Warner
Donnelly	McCaskey	Warren
Duckworth	McConnell	Whitehouse
Enzi	Menendez	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Wyden
Fischer	Murkowski	Young
Flake	Murphy	
Franken	Murray	

NAYS—8

Carper	Gillibrand	Sanders
Durbin	Merkley	Udall
Feinstein	Paul	

NOT VOTING—1

Cruz

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 91, the nays are 8.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

CHANGE OF VOTE

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, on rollcall vote No. 140, I voted yea. It was my intention to vote nay. Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote since it will not affect the outcome of the vote.

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

(The foregoing tally has been changed to reflect the above order.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues to speak about the need to ensure that the policies that we make in this Chamber work for and support rural America.

Senators STABENOW, HEITKAMP, and I are all from the Midwest—the heartland. We represent the people who are truly in the middle of this country—the middle of the country economically, politically—and who are often middle-income people who need representatives who are focused on what matters to them.

Each year I visit all 87 counties in my State, and I hear a lot. I hear about dads who can't be sure their sons or daughters will have the support they need to take over the family farm when the time comes, small business owners who can't get a broadband connection, moms who can't figure out how to pay for their kids' prescriptions when the costs go up, and manufacturers who can't find workers to fill jobs.

Rural America has been left behind. The poverty rate in their areas for kids is higher than it is in urban areas. Businesses may not invest when they can't get reliable internet access or they can't get the right people to support their operation. Housing is hard to come by.

We should be focused on supporting our farmers and ensuring that people can raise a family in a small town and have the healthcare they need. We should be making sure that high-quality education is attainable and that job training options are available and affordable. We should be able to provide every person in this country with a clear path to a good job.

Unfortunately, from the administration we have seen a disconnect between rhetoric and policy. We have seen a budget that hits the heartland with 21 percent cuts in the Department of Agriculture—cuts to grant programs that support rural homeownership, provide clean drinking water and wastewater systems, and promote access to critical services such as rural hospitals. It eliminates rural business programs that help create hundreds of thousands of jobs. If enacted, these cuts would have a damaging impact on rural communities throughout the country.

Rural communities help our country get ahead. They are the backbone of our country. We need to work to find common ground on these issues, and we need a budget that helps and not hurts the heartland.

I see my colleague from Michigan, Senator STABENOW, is here as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I want to first thank my friend and colleague, the senior Senator from Minnesota, Ms. KLOBUCHAR. She is a very important part of our Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee. She provides tremendous leadership. We both come from great "M" States. So it is always great to have an opportunity to be part of sharing remarks on such an important topic. I am also pleased to state that Senator HEITKAMP will be joining us today, as well, from another very important rural State.

Michigan small towns and rural communities embody much of our State's way of life and drive our economy forward. I grew up in one of those small towns, in Clare, in Northern Michigan. I believe that towns like mine should be celebrated and strengthened. We want young people to go to college and feel that there is a future to come home to, either back to the farm or the small business or participating in the community or maybe working at the local hospital, but being part of continuing this important way of life.

People in our communities deserve every opportunity to be able to raise their families with well-paying jobs and a high quality of life, like everyone in every part of Michigan and all across the country wants to have, but

many rural areas and many small towns face unique challenges in developing and maintaining infrastructure.

Broadband. We now need to make sure that the farm at the end of the road is connected with high-speed internet. At one point in our country's history, it was the telephone. It was electric poles and being able to connect the farm at the end of the road to the rest of the community. Now it is high-speed broadband, and it is critically important that that happen.

Providing high-quality health services and education. My mother was a nurse—the director of nursing—at the small hospital in Clare for many, many years. So I know how important not only healthcare was and making sure there were doctors in our town but also making sure there were jobs, because one of the top employers in our community was the hospital. That remains true today.

When the Trump administration released its budget proposal at the end of the month, frankly, I was shocked to see the kinds of disinvestments and sharp cuts that would hurt small towns like Clare and rural communities all across Michigan and all across the country. No matter which part you look at, President Trump's budget is bad for rural Michigan, and it is bad for rural America.

First, the budget calls for a 21-percent cut to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which is our second largest industry. One out of four jobs in Michigan is connected to agriculture and the food economy. In the President's budget, it was decided that the third largest cut to any Federal agency would be in the Department of Agriculture. This will dramatically reduce and eliminate very key rural development services.

The budget would zero out funding for water and sewer infrastructure projects, which is amazing to me. I can drive from one end of Michigan to the other and see communities in which rural development has made all the difference in supporting the ability to have clean water and water and sewer systems, as well as other important infrastructure. This program has improved nearly 6,000 rural water systems, including many in Michigan. There is an extremely high demand for upgrading water and sewer systems across the country. Right now, the USDA has a backlog of nearly 1,000 applications from small towns that need to improve their water systems.

President Trump's answer, as part of his infrastructure package, is to say that this will come from not supporting rural communities ourselves but leaving it up to Wall Street investors or, maybe, foreign countries to invest in our water systems, like Saudi Arabia or China. The fact is that Wall Street investors are not investing in rural communities. I would argue that that is not a good strategy anyway. We know that, when you depend on that kind of a strategy—foreign country investor or Wall Street investor efforts—

those investments are not being done in small towns like the one in which I grew up. Towns with populations of a few hundred people cannot afford the high interest rates—or the toll roads, by the way—that come with a lot of the projects in this kind of approach.

The budget also undermines rural jobs and businesses in communities in which unemployment is already too high. The USDA's small business loans are eliminated under the President's budget. Again, I can go from community to community around Michigan and see wonderful small businesses operating with the support of rural development loans. These are programs that have saved almost 800,000 jobs and have helped finance more than 107,000 businesses in the last 8 years alone.

This proposal that the White House put out also jeopardizes what I talked about earlier, which is rural broadband, or high-speed internet, for communities in order to access education, rural healthcare, and telemedicine, as well as addressing issues like resources to curb the opioid epidemic. Last year, the FCC found that 39 percent of rural Americans—that is, roughly, 23 million people—lack access to high-speed internet service. This is astounding to me when we look at this as a challenge that we have in 2017.

President Trump's budget also targets the farm bill directly for \$231 billion in cuts. We work together on a strategy for a 5-year economic development plan. We do it on a bipartisan basis. It will be time to bring that up again next year. That 5-year process gives certainty to our farmers and communities and those interested and committed to conservation and bioenergy and all of the other provisions in the farm bill. To see—outside of this 5-year period and our bipartisan process—the Trump administration come in and target these funds for a cut of \$231 billion, again, is shocking to me. If that were to pass, it would be impossible for us to write the next farm bill next year.

Cutting crop insurance by \$29 billion would take away critical support for farmers right at a time of low commodity prices. We moved from subsidies to risk management in crop insurance in the last bill, saving taxpayer dollars. We made a commitment to farmers purchasing insurance, where they are writing a check for the insurance bill instead of getting a subsidy during good times, but you have the insurance if there is a weather event, if commodity prices are low, if there is another challenge like we are seeing today for our farmers.

Our farmers also need export opportunities in order to sell their products, which are in high demand around the world. We have to be able to sell agricultural products. The budget eliminates important market-access programs to help our farmers sell. Simply put, cuts to these programs mean lower economic growth, less development, less opportunity, and a lower quality of

life in small towns in Michigan and all across rural America.

Our small towns and rural communities deserve better, and we are standing here today as advocates and voices for them. We know, as farm prices are down nearly 50 percent from their highs just a few years ago and producers are struggling to make ends meet, that these are challenging times, and we need to understand that. We need to write a farm bill and focus on those areas to support our farmers and growers. We know there are those like our dairy farmers, in particular, who are in challenging times, and we need to make sure we are addressing their concerns as well.

Rural America is the economic backbone of the country. Somebody has to grow something, and somebody has to make something. Otherwise, you do not have an economy. That is what happens in rural Michigan and rural America. Yet we also know that too many communities are still struggling to recover from the great recession.

From my perspective, I join with the 500 groups from every part of agriculture, the food economy, nutrition, and conservation groups—everyone involved in the food economy—in saying that we cannot afford additional cuts to agriculture, rural communities, and other parts of the farm bill that support our ongoing economy.

It is critically important that we stand with those in every small town in Michigan and across our country in saying that we understand and are partners with you in making sure that, when you work hard, you have the quality of life for yourself and your family that you deserve, and we are going to do our part to make sure that support is there.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, while I join Senator STABENOW in her remarks, I want to thank her for her tremendous leadership on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee and for working across the aisle with Chairman ROBERTS. The two of them, I have no doubt, will be able to come to an agreement and keep working on getting an even stronger farm bill. It took some Herculean efforts to get the last farm bill done, and it would not have happened without her. I appreciate what she said about the importance of the farm bill and the USDA.

I would also add another important pillar of strong rural economics, and that is job training.

Starting with high school, I think we all have to come to grips with the fact that not every kid wants to get a 4-year degree. In fact, we have so many openings across this country—millions of job openings—whether it be on a plant floor, whether it be as a plumber or as a welder, that can be obtained with a 1-year or a 2-year degree. My own sister did not graduate from high

school. She went on, years later, and got her GED, and then she went on to get a 2-year degree. After that, she got 2 more years of training and became an accountant. There is not just one path in America.

Part of this is investing in STEM—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—and doing it early so that kids get a jump start on the jobs of tomorrow. By the way, this is not just your Ph.D.s and Silicon Valley jobs. This also includes blue-collar jobs. I call it blue STEM. There is a shortage, as I said, of welders and auto mechanics, and those can be good-paying jobs. We need to talk about them with dignity, and we have to realize that this is where the openings are.

The other piece of this, in addition to training kids in high school, is to make sure we have apprenticeship programs available. This year, a report came out in my State that 68 percent of Minnesota manufacturers found it was difficult for them to find workers with the right skills and experience. That is up from 40 percent in 2010.

I see that Senator HEITKAMP is here. As they are starting to add some more jobs in the oil patch in North Dakota, it is going to become even harder to find Minnesotans to fill some of our jobs because some of them like to go over to North Dakota.

Senator COLLINS and I have introduced a bill called the American Apprenticeship Act, which would expand tuition assistance for pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs. The President has talked about workforce development as being a priority. Yet we have seen a cut of 15 percent in Department of Education grants for career and technical education, as well as a 36-percent cut to Labor Department funding for training and employment services.

As I noted before, there is this disconnect between the rhetoric we hear and what we are reading in the black and white of this budget. I know there are people on both sides of the aisle here, including the Senator from North Dakota, who want to work on bridging that difference and getting a good budget done that really helps rural America.

I see Senator HEITKAMP is here, and I thank her for coming. Senator HEITKAMP serves on the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee. She was an integral part of the last farm bill and will be an integral part of this as well as in really understanding the economics within a rural State.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I thank my good friend the Senator from Minnesota. She just exists to the east of me. We share a common border, but we also share a common belief that Washington is not devoid of ideas. Somehow, it has just lost the capacity to bring those ideas to fruition. As my great friend the Senator from Minnesota can attest, there are hundreds—

and probably thousands—of great ideas for small business, for workers, for improving the economic conditions of people in this country that are here, ready for debate, and ready for passage.

What is not a formula for success for America is the budget. The President's budget would devastate rural communities. I am not given to hyperbole, and I am not given to exaggeration, but the absolute, bare fact is that this budget will decimate economic opportunity not only for American agriculture but for economic opportunity and security for rural communities.

When we think about North Dakota, it is hard to imagine a State that most of the people in this country would imagine more equated with rural America. I tease AMY many times when I tell her: Oh, it is coming up from the Cities, because our big opportunity to travel and to see the sites of the big city really is Minneapolis and St. Paul. But a lot of Minnesota—a lot of western Minnesota in particular, the area that I know about—is engaged in agriculture, and we share a common border, but we share a common purpose.

I wanted to start off by saying that in North Dakota, we understand the value of rural communities. We understand the value of investing in agriculture and infrastructure and how important those things are to boosting our local economy. We see the direct impacts of it on our families, businesses, and towns.

Most of us—me included—come from towns of fewer than 100 people. In fact, I am proud to say that growing up, there were nine people in my family, and my family was one-tenth of the population of the small town I lived in. We are proud of that. We are proud of our rural roots, and we are proud that from those life experiences growing up, we learned a lot about compromise, we learned a lot about work ethic, and we learned a lot about the importance of community and working together.

We also learned a lot about the importance of investment. Without critical investment, our rural communities are at risk, and I think that could have dramatic and drastic ramifications for our State, our counties, our families, and our neighbors. Instead of lifting up rural communities, the Presidential budget pushes us down.

Rural communities and the jobs there—including agriculture—are vital to many of the families I know but really families across the country. There are over 30,000 farmers and ranchers in North Dakota who lead the country in producing spring wheat, durum, sunflowers, canola, dry edible beans, flax, honey, and many more specialty crops and grain crops. These farmers feed North Dakota, our country, and the world.

In 2015, agriculture contributed more than \$9.1 billion to my State's economy. That may not seem like a lot when we are talking about California, but that is a huge amount when we are talking about North Dakota.

About one-third of North Dakota's jobs are directly tied to agriculture. There are implement dealers, veterinarians, agriculture retailers, and many more who are closely associated with agribusiness. There are countless other jobs that support these rural communities, such as teachers, firefighters, police officers, and more.

Since the election, there has been a great deal of talk in Washington about rural America. I think rural America reared up its head in this past election and said "We are not to be forgotten" and they believed they had secured an advocate in Washington in this current administration, only to be basically told otherwise by a Presidential budget.

So what does the budget mean, and why should we pay attention to it? I think the first thing we need to know about a budget is that it is about priorities. It is really a values document. Unfortunately, the President's budget shows that the administration doesn't value North Dakota or really, in fact, rural America. In fact, it targets both.

Today I want to talk a little bit more specifically about how devastating this budget would be for rural communities across my State and across the country.

This budget would slash USDA's budget by over 21 percent, cutting \$231 billion from funding from the farm bill over the next decade. It would specifically cut \$29 billion—\$29 billion—from crop insurance over the next decade. This is crop insurance our farmers rely on, especially at a time of challenging weather and low commodity prices. Crop insurance helps prevent family farms from going under when disaster strikes. Without an affordable crop insurance program, a drought or a flood could wipe out the wealth of an entire family and basically bankrupt a family farm.

When ranchers and farmers do well, North Dakota does well, and so will all the rest of the country. To challenge these farmers with a crop insurance program that will be nonexistent is to take away the opportunity for food security in this country—food security that is so closely linked and important to national security.

By drastically reducing field staff, the President's budget also prevents USDA from achieving its mission to support rural communities. The budget calls for reducing staffing levels at USDA by 5,200 employees. Nearly 2,500 of those employees are with the Farm Service Agency, Rural Development, and Natural Resources. What does that mean? The Farm Service Agency's caseloads have increased in North Dakota, and the current hiring ban has hampered efforts to administer the farm programs—those efforts which are critical to farmers as they make their business decisions.

I can't tell my colleagues the number of times farmers across my State have come up to me and said how grateful they are that the Farm Service Agency

is available in their county and available to them to provide advice and much needed documentation on their decisionmaking on how they are going to implement the farm program.

In fact, I tease those farmers a little bit, because they always say: You know, that Farm Service gal—usually a woman who has been with the Agency over decades and knows that farm as well as that farmer, and when that farmer walks through the door to get that advice and to get that number, they know that not only do they have a friend sitting across the table from them—probably a neighbor—they also have an advocate sitting across the table. We don't want to lose that connection to this vital service, the Farm Service Agency, by making this about picking up the phone and pressing buttons and talking to someone who would barely even understand or even know North Dakota or the county the farmer is in. So at a time when farmers and ranchers are already experiencing low commodity prices, these cuts to the Farm Service Agency would limit the ability of that Agency to provide timely, accurate, and useful services to our family farmers and our ranchers.

The budget would create huge challenges for rural healthcare. On top of the \$800-plus billion taken out of the Medicaid Program by the Republican healthcare bill, this budget would also cut \$610 billion from Medicaid by reducing it to a block grant program.

Medicaid is a lifesaving, cost-effective program that enables more than 90,000 seniors, individuals and children with disabilities, and low-income families to get affordable, quality care.

I want my colleagues to think about the enormous challenge of delivering healthcare in a sparsely populated area. One of the challenges my rural healthcare providers have not had in the last many years since the implementation of the Affordable Care Act is uncompensated care. But when we go back to uncompensated care, on top of operating on razor-thin margins, we are now going to say that not only are you operating on razor-thin margins, but you are not going to have your bills paid, making it impossible for you to continue to provide these resources.

So we have real challenges in rural healthcare as a result of this budget and the Republican proposal.

The President's budget also cuts nearly \$400 million in Federal funds for substance abuse prevention and behavioral health workforce training programs at the same time that every part of this country—particularly rural parts of our country—is facing opioid abuse. In North Dakota alone, fatalities from opioid abuse have grown 125 percent.

I met just yesterday with the North Dakota Medical Association, which told me that every day this week in Fargo, ND, there has been a death as a

result of overdoses. It is hard to imagine that is happening in our rural communities in places like North Dakota, but it is.

I talked to a healthcare provider in Dickinson, ND, who told me that while his average percentage of Medicaid recipients in his hospital is about 15 to 20 percent, as it relates to opioids and behavior and mental health, it is well over 60, bordering on 70 percent. So the population, without Medicaid dollars, would not be able to get important rehabilitation and treatment services.

Last week, I also visited one of our rural airports that are dependent on the Essential Air Service. That is absolutely critical to maintaining air service in Jamestown, in Devil's Lake, and now in Dickinson, which has gone back to Essential Air Service after years of not needing that support because of the growth in the Bakken oilfield.

Last week, while talking to the folks in Dickinson, they told me there are 475 jobs which are dependent on the airport, which helped generate \$76.6 million for the area in 2015. The Dickinson Airport would receive about \$4.2 million in assistance from the Essential Air Service each year, but when we look at how that investment pays off in terms of dividends, it seems like a small price to pay.

It would eliminate funding to protect water programs and infrastructure in rural areas which have improved water and wastewater systems for more than 40 North Dakota towns, Tribal reservations, and water districts since 2010.

This budget would also eliminate the Community Development Block Grant Program, which helped the State of North Dakota improve housing conditions for low- and moderate-income families with \$4.9 million in investments in 2016.

It would eliminate the Economic Development Administration, which has provided over \$34 million in investments since 2009 to local economic development organizations in North Dakota, particularly those in rural towns.

The list goes on and on and on. We haven't talked about the reduction in services for export markets. We haven't talked about research reductions at USDA and what that would mean. We haven't talked about eliminating trade assistance. All of these things have huge consequences for large pieces of the United States of America.

What I would say to the administration is that rural America expects better. Rural America thought they were going to get better than this. Rural America has enough challenges. We have volatile commodity prices, healthcare shortages, declining populations, and I will tell my colleagues that today in North Dakota, there is a potential disaster from drought. The President's budget would not only not help rural America thrive, it would only make matters worse.

Rather than taking an ax to proven, successful programs that strengthen

our rural communities, we need strong investments in rural communities, jobs, and families, that help support North Dakota's future.

With this budget, the administration's priorities are clear for everyone to see. It is now Congress's job to set spending priorities and fund programs in rural America to a level so that we know rural America can not only survive but can thrive.

North Dakota needs and deserves a strong voice at the table. I will make sure that we tell the story of all of these programs, that we tell the story of how critically important these programs are to maintaining our opportunity to produce food in our country but also to raise our children in rural settings. It is beyond belief to me that we are in this situation given the level of support that rural America provided to this administration and to this President during the last election.

We know we can do better, and we will do better. We know we can't waste money. We know we have to deploy these valuable resources in ways that actually produce results. I can show my colleagues result after result after result and the importance of providing these services so that rural communities can thrive.

I will close with this: A little-known fact is that so many of our rural communities today are the most impoverished places in America. When people think of poverty, they think of inner city poverty, they think of other pieces of America they have seen, but we know that the rates of poverty, the rates of challenges in terms of healthcare, education—those challenges are much greater in rural America. The last thing we need to do is saddle rural America with a 500-pound rock, put it on their backs, and still expect them to thrive. This budget is a 500-pound rock on the backs of our farmers who work every day to put food on their table, but more importantly, work every day to feed America.

With that, I yield the floor and turn it back to my friend from the State of Minnesota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I again thank Senator HEITKAMP for her understanding not just of farm policy but also the importance of keeping towns strong, manufacturing strong, and transportation strong.

I will note that the infrastructure portions of this budget are very concerning. The point has been made by others that right now, under the proposed budget, at a time when our deteriorating infrastructure is costing our economy a lot of money—not just congestion, not just potholes, but in delaying getting goods to market—unfortunately, this budget proposal would cut funding for vital transportation programs.

It will eliminate funding for the TIGER Grant Program. Currently, the

program provides \$500 million per year to help fund local transportation priorities. It eliminates funding for Essential Air Service, which helps support commercial air service to rural airports. It eliminates the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grant Program, which funds light rail, heavy rail, commuter rail, street car, and bus rapid transit projects. We can't wait any longer to make critical investments in our infrastructure.

Probably right up there with any of these infrastructure needs in rural America is broadband. Internet access is a great equalizing force for creating jobs and leveling the playing field. There is a big digital gap when it comes to rural America. I know the percentages; close to 40 percent of Americans in rural areas do not have access to high-speed broadband. It used to be that slow speed would be OK if someone was trying to email their kid in school maybe 10, 15 years ago, but this is not true anymore. Now, if you want to do your work, if you want to go to the hospital—whatever you want to do in rural America, you are going to have to have high-speed internet.

I think about the doctor in Brainerd, MN, who for so long could look at x rays in the hospital but couldn't look at them in his home. If he had some emergency and wanted to talk to someone when he got home that evening, he had to go to the McDonald's parking lot to be able to do that.

There was a student at one of our reservations who got Wi-Fi in his house, looked out the window, and all of a sudden all these kids were doing their homework in his front yard. That is just not right. Rural Americans deserve equal footing so they can launch new businesses, export their goods, or just Skype with their loved ones.

This is about the farm bill, yes, but it is also about this budget and making sure this budget works for all Americans and leaves no one behind.

Sadly, these cuts are specifically targeted at rural America. That is why we are going to fight to make sure, hopefully on a bipartisan basis with colleagues on the Republican side, we produce a budget that is fair to everyone.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

(The remarks of Mr. FLAKE pertaining to the introduction of S. 1305 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. TOOMEY). The Senator from New York.

(The remarks of Mrs. GILLIBRAND and Mr. CASSIDY pertaining to the introduction of S. 1313 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to bring two baskets of hemp products onto the floor of this body.

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

NATIONAL HEMP HISTORY WEEK

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, this is National Hemp History Week, a chance to recognize a product that has deep roots going way back in America but faces some of the most anti-farmer, anti-job, unjustifiable policies that are on the American legal books today. Because of its relation to marijuana, hemp can't legally be grown in American fields.

Now, hemp is harmless. Hemp grown for industrial use simply does not have marijuana psychoactive properties. You are going to get as high off hemp as you will off a bag of vegetables. But, still, farmers in Oregon and across the country can't legally grow it. So if America is serious about banning harmless products like hemp, just because they are related to drugs, then I have bad news for fans of poppy seed muffins.

This is the third year I have come to the floor during this time—National Hemp History Week—to talk about the importance of industrial hemp, its huge economic potential for hard-working farmers, and the indefensible ban that keeps so many American farmers from growing it. As was the case before, I am joined by Malcolm McGeary from Southern Oregon, where a lot of farmers have an interest in this, to showcase a variety of hemp products in these baskets on the floor because, despite the ban on growing hemp, you can legally import it for use in products sold in stores across the country.

What really changed my mind on this was when my wife was pregnant—we are older parents—with our third child, and we went into a Costco store. We went into a Costco store on a weekend at home in Oregon, and there were these big bags of hemp hearts, and it said: healthy, good for the blood pressure, fiber—everything that one would expect in Pennsylvania or Oregon. I know the Presiding Officer is one of the most physically fit members of the body. I see him in the gym all the time so he obviously cares a lot about nutrition. So Nancy and I were walking through Costco, and it said this giant bag of hemp hearts could be purchased there. You say to yourself: Let me see if I get this straight. The hemp comes from Canada, so the farmers must just be laughing all the way to the bank because they are making money. I get what we do is we put it in bags, and it is sold in Costco. That led me to the really intellectual concept of saying that if you can sell it at a Costco in Oregon, why can't our farmers grow it? It is not much more complicated than that.

When you are shopping for hemp products, it is not just potato sacks and rough fabric by the yard. There is

clothing, lotions and food, hemp milk, nutritional supplements—all these products Mr. McGeary has—used to make soaps, cleaners, and even deck stain. I understand Mr. McGeary may even be wearing a hemp tie. None of these products can be called 100 percent American because every bit of the hemp in these baskets had to be grown someplace else, which is essentially what I described as the Wydens toured Costco at home.

When it was imported, it wasn't an American farmer earning money off that sale. Despite the consumer demand for hemp products and the ingenuity of so many producers who find uses for it, American farmers are cut out of the hemp equation.

The ban on hemp is not anti-drug policy. I think that is what has been confusing with respect to this issue. The ban on hemp is not going to advance the cause of being against drugs. It is not anti-drug policy. It is anti-farmer policy, and it is anti-American jobs policy.

As I indicated, if you can buy it in a local supermarket, the American farmer ought to be able to grow it. Yet year after year, despite a lot of work from Members on both sides of the aisle in this body and in the House, hemp remains on the controlled substance list.

Hemp is not a drug. It is a big opportunity for our farmers. So it is long past time to end these statutory relics of history that cut American farmers out of a valuable market.

Despite the fact that hemp continues to be stigmatized by Federal laws, there is some good news and progress. The 2014 farm bill began to chip away at the Federal ban. It OK'd hemp research projects led by universities and agriculture departments in States like Oregon and Kentucky that take a smarter approach to hemp. These projects are showing significant success. Farmers are ready to grow hemp, and States' agriculture departments are ready to regulate.

The first steps, in my view, don't go far enough, and even some of these early projects remain tied up in red-tape due to the Federal ban.

In my view, the only real solution is a legislative solution. So here we have a bipartisan coalition, the kind of coalition you see in the U.S. Senate when people really look into the facts and Members decide to make common cause. We have the good fortune of having the majority leader, Senator McConnell of Kentucky, as one of our principal sponsors; Senator PAUL, his colleague; Senator MERKLEY; and I re-introducing the Hemp Farming Act. We pursued this for a number of years. I introduced it every Congress since 2011.

Last year, our bipartisan bill had more than a dozen Senate cosponsors. This year, the goal is to again find common ground to remove hemp from the schedule I controlled substance list, give the go-ahead to farmers across the country who are ready to grow industrial hemp, and, once again, make it a true American crop.

I hope my colleagues will join in the effort to celebrate National Hemp History Week. I hope they will use it to learn more about a very versatile crop, a safe crop, and one with really extraordinary potential to boost jobs in the economy, in our agricultural sector, and our domestic employment base.

This is commonsense legislation. Again, we have the good fortune to be led by the majority leader, the distinguished Senator from Kentucky, Mr. McConnell. We will be introducing this commonsense legislation very shortly.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCAIN. 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. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I rise in support of Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act of 2017. For too long, a myopic focus on the Iran deal blinded the United States to Iran's persistent campaign to destabilize the Middle East and undermine America's national security interests. Iran has been given a free pass to detain U.S. sailors in clear violation of international law, conduct ballistic missile tests in violation of the United Nations resolutions, support terrorist groups across the region, and prop up the murderous Assad regime in Syria.

It is long past time for the United States and the international community to hold Iran accountable, not just for its commitments under the nuclear deal but for its destabilizing behavior across the Middle East. This legislation begins to do just that by imposing new sanctions on Iran's ballistic missile program, applying terrorism sanctions to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, imposing sanctions on Iranians engaged in human rights abuses, and tightening enforcement on arms embargoes on the Iranian regime.

I thank the chairman and ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senators CORKER and CARDIN, for ringing this bill to the floor. They recognize that the United States must not stand idly by when hostile regimes undermine and attack our interests and that of our allies. They recognize that regimes that aid and abet crimes against humanity must be held accountable. They recognize that weakness in the face of aggression is provocative.

These are the reasons we must pass this legislation, but these are also the very same reasons this legislation must be amended to strengthen and expand sanctions against Vladimir Putin's Russia.

In just the last 3 years under Vladimir Putin, Russia has invaded Ukraine, annexed Crimea, threatened NATO allies, and intervened militarily in Syria,

leaving a trail of death, destruction, and broken promises in its wake.

Last year, Russia attacked the foundations of American democracy with a cyber and information campaign to interfere in America's 2016 election. It has been 8 months now since the U.S. intelligence community publicly concluded that the Russian Government had attempted to interfere in our last Presidential election.

On October 7, 2016, the Department of Homeland Security and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence stated that the "U.S. intelligence community is confident that the Russian government directed the recent compromises of e-mails from U.S. persons and institutions, including from U.S. political organizations." The statement concluded that "only Russia's senior-most officials could have authorized these activities."

On January 6, 2017, the U.S. intelligence community went even further, concluding:

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the United States presidential election. Russia's goals were to undermine public faith in the United States democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency.

The intelligence community "did not make an assessment of the impact that Russian activities had on the outcome of the 2016 election," but they did warn that "Moscow will apply lessons learned from its Putin-ordered campaign aimed at the U.S. Presidential election to future influence efforts worldwide, including against U.S. allies and their election processes."

Since January, months of congressional hearings, testimony, and investigative work have reinforced these conclusions: that Russia deliberately interfered in our recent election with cyber attacks and a disinformation campaign designed to weaken America and undermine faith in our democracy and our values.

Vladimir Putin's brazen attack on our democracy is a flagrant demonstration of his disdain and disrespect for our Nation. This should not just outrage every American, it should compel us to action. But in the last 8 months, what price has Russia paid for attacking American democracy? Hardly any at all: modest sanctions against a few Russian individuals and entities, some Russian diplomats and spies sent home to Russia, two spy compounds have closed, at least for now—and all of this reversible and at the discretion of the President.

What has Russia's reaction been to America's tepid response and reaction to its aggressive behavior? More of the same. More aggression, more meddling. Russia attempted to overthrow the democratically elected Government of Montenegro and murder its Prime Minister. Russia attempted to interfere in France's election. We have already seen attempts to influence German public opinion ahead of the elections in

September, and there is every expectation that Russia will do the same thing in the Czech Republic, Italy, and elsewhere in future elections.

Sooner or later, my friends, there will be another American election that captures Russian attention and interest. The victim may be a Republican or a Democrat. To Putin, it won't matter because his targets are not Republicans or Democrats but Americans and all that we stand for as a people. He seeks to sow dissent amongst us and divide us from one another, to erode our resolve to resist his dark and dangerous view of the world, and to undermine our confidence in ourselves and our belief in our own values.

We must take our own side in this fight—not as Republicans, not as Democrats, but as Americans. It is time to respond to Russia's attack on American democracy with strength and resolve, with common purpose, and with action. Together with Senator GRAHAM and a number of other Senators, I am prepared to offer an amendment to this legislation that will begin to do just that. It incorporates some of the best ideas from different pieces of legislation already introduced in the Senate, ideas that have broad bipartisan support.

The amendment we are talking about would impose mandatory sanctions on transactions with the Russian defense or intelligence sectors, including the FSB and the GRU, the Russian military intelligence agency that was primarily responsible for Russia's attack on our election.

The amendment would impose mandatory visa bans and asset freezes on any individual who undermines the cyber security of public or private infrastructure and democratic institutions. It would impose mandatory sanctions on those who assist or support such activities.

The amendment would codify existing sanctions on Russia by placing into law five Executive orders signed by President Obama in response to both Russian interference in the 2016 election and its illegal actions in Ukraine, and it would take new steps to tighten those sanctions. For example, Russia's ability to issue new sovereign debt essentially allows Russia to borrow money from global capital markets to offset pressure from existing U.S. and European sanctions. So this amendment would impose mandatory sanctions on U.S. and third-party investment in sales of Russian sovereign debt as well as in the privatization of Russian state-owned assets.

The amendment would target the Russian energy sector, which is controlled by Vladimir Putin's cronies, with sanctions on investments in Russian petroleum and natural gas development as well as Russian energy pipelines.

We also need to put additional pressure on the ability of Putin and his cronies to move money they have looted from the Russian state. So this

amendment would mandate that the Secretary of the Treasury establish a high-level task force within the Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network that would focus on tracing, mapping, and prosecuting illicit financial flows linked to Russia if such flows interact with the U.S. financial system. The task force would also work with liaison officers in key U.S. Embassies, especially in Europe, to work with local authorities to uncover and prosecute the networks responsible for the illicit Russian financial flows.

Finally, recognizing that Russia seeks to undermine not just American democracy but Western democracy altogether, this amendment would provide support to the State Department, the Global Engagement Center, and USAID to help build the resilience of democratic institutions in Europe against Russian aggression exerted through corruption, propaganda, and other forms of political interference.

We need a strong Russia sanctions amendment. We need it now. We need it on this piece of legislation. We need this amendment because we have no time to waste. The United States of America needs to send a strong message to Vladimir Putin and any other aggressor that we will not tolerate attacks on our democracy. There is no greater threat to our freedoms than attacks on our ability to choose our own leaders free from foreign interference. So we must act accordingly, and we must act now.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, this body has a dual obligation—to ensure that there are sanctions against Iran for its destabilizing activity around the region and, indeed, the world but also sanctions against Russia for its interference with our election—one of the core democratic institutions of our Nation—as well as other acts that are hostile to the world order and to world peace.

I support S. 722, the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act, but I strongly believe it should have Russian sanctions included as well.

As the Senate proceeds to this urgently needed measure, Iran's own Parliament has suffered an ISIS-claimed terrorist attack in Tehran. I condemn that act of terror—one of many the world has suffered because of ISIS. We are at war with ISIS as we are with terrorists—extremism—around the world. It intentionally targets civilians. It uses violence to spread terror and destabilize the Middle East. ISIS has been a world terror organization.

The fact that Iran's leaders themselves direct and glorify terrorism against Israel and the United States does not diminish the horror of what has occurred. People of all faiths from an increasingly diverse number of nations have become victims of this terror spread by ISIS and Iran. What occurred today is, sadly, more evidence that Iran's unconditional support for Bashar al-Assad is directly counter to the interests of the Iranian people and our ongoing efforts to defeat ISIS.

We must hold Iran accountable. We must hold it accountable for its many malign activities through increasing and enforcing strong, targeted sanctions. I thank my colleagues, including Senator MCCAIN, who just spoke so forcefully on the floor, Senator MENENDEZ, Senator CORKER, Senator CARDIN, as well as other colleagues who have worked on this cause. We must hold Iran accountable for the threat its acts of terrorism pose to our national security. We must hold it accountable to the threat its missile program holds to our allies, including Israel—our major strategic partner in that region. We must hold Iran accountable for the gross violations of human rights and war crimes that it and Russia together are perpetrating in Syria.

In the last few months, Iran has tested and fired ballistic missiles, tested a new Russian-made air defense system against missiles, and harassed U.S. ships. It continues to arm and enable the Hamas terrorist organization, the despotic Assad regime, and the supply of weapons to Hezbollah. It has enabled Hezbollah to amass 150,000 rockets and missiles—all aimed at civilians in Israel.

Last month, the State Department released a report on Iran's human rights violations. It continues to show a troubling trend of abuse and notes that Iran has more than 800 political prisoners and that it executed at least 469 people just last year.

We know that sanctions must be targeted and continually strengthened to deter Iran. This legislation will impose sanctions on Iran for its support of terrorism, human rights violations, and ballistic missile development. That includes sanctioning any person who knowingly violates arms embargoes or materially contributes to Iran's ballistic missile program. It also includes terrorism-related sanctions on members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its affiliates—going beyond members of the Quds Force, who are already sanctioned.

In no way does this sanctions program contradict or undermine the nuclear agreement with Iran. That agreement provided us and our allies the time and space to now push Iran to end its malign activities without the imminent threat of a nuclear weapon.

Congress must do everything it can to authorize new measures against Iran and ensure that this new administration effectively enforces them. We must also seize this opportunity to

hold Russia accountable as well for its egregious, aggressive behavior and ongoing violations of international law.

Russia's cooperation with Iran, including providing Iran with an S-300 air missile defense system that it recently tested, strengthens Iran as it fuels and finances a network of terrorism. Under Putin's direction, Russia both enabled and tried to cover up crimes in Syria. It invaded Ukraine. It illegally annexed Crimea. It attacked and interfered with our democracy.

Enough is enough. That is why I urge this body to adopt Russian sanctions as part of S. 722. Sadly and dangerously, our President has proven time and again to be unwilling to hold Vladimir Putin accountable. Congress must ensure that he does so. It must ensure that Russia receives a clear, unequivocal signal through this measure, Senator CARDIN's Counteracting Russian Hostilities Act, and Senator GRAHAM's Russia Sanctions Review Act, as an amendment to be adopted by this body to the Iran legislation, which I helped author. These measures are critical to sending a message that we will hold Russia accountable for its lawbreaking, its support of terrorism, its interference in our elections, its annexation of Crimea, its invasion of Ukraine, and its violation of the INF Treaty. I can accept nothing short of including these Russia bills to move forward to a final vote. I will support S. 722, but I believe there is a track and a path for this body to do both, and we must do it.

The imposition of mandatory sanctions codifying former President Obama's Executive orders regarding Ukraine and malicious cyber activity, as well as targeting individuals and entities contributing to Russia's oil and gas industries, should be part of this final passage. We cannot afford to wait any longer to take action.

I am disappointed that the President has seemed disinterested or at least unwilling to join in these sanctions against Russia. Unfortunately, the testimony that former Director Jim Comey will deliver tomorrow provides evidence as to possible motive and intent in his discussions with Comey that reflect on his apparent willingness to tolerate this aggressive conduct by Russia without holding it accountable.

This testimony from Director Comey is an explosive corroboration of the facts that have been reported—that the President asked for loyalty, threatening Jim Comey's job, and tried to influence the FBI's ongoing criminal investigation on multiple occasions. This conduct shows unequivocally the disdain the President has for the rule of law and clearly demonstrates that he believes he and his friends and family are above the law. I am saddened and I am chilled that this harrowing account will be given to the Senate Intelligence Committee rather than, in fact, in a fictional spy novel.

Director Comey deserves credit for his willingness to come before the committee, for his apparent candor and

truthfulness, and for his resistance to those demands for a pledge of loyalty and an end to the Flynn investigation, even when it meant his firing.

His testimony should serve as evidence in the investigation led by Robert Mueller but also as evidence that Mr. Mueller must have unimpeded space, resources, and independence to conduct his investigation. I will take action as a member of the Judiciary Committee to seek oversight simply to ensure that those resources are independent and are safeguarded. With this documented proof, clearly the White House has sought to derail our law enforcement officials in their enforcing of the law. We must ensure an end to such conduct, and we must send Russia a signal that, in fact, it will be held accountable; that the investigation into its meddling in our election will be pursued vigorously and aggressively; that anyone in this country who colluded with or aided and abetted that meddling will be held accountable; and that there will be no obstruction of justice. This goal should unite us across the aisle on a bipartisan basis.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I voted no today on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to consideration of S. 722, the Iran sanctions bill.

I did so not because I oppose the underlying bill and the need to further sanction Iran's belligerent missile and terrorist activity; in fact, I support that legislation. I voted no to give a moment's pause after the terrible ISIS attack in Tehran that just occurred.

Earlier today, a pair of deadly attacks occurred over several hours in Tehran, including in the nation's parliament building, indiscriminately killing at least 12 people and wounding dozens more. The heavily armed assailants targeted guards, cleaners, and administrative employees of the parliament. ISIS later claimed responsibility for this barbaric attack.

I certainly have my differences with the Iranian regime, its continued sponsorship of Hezbollah and Hamas, its threats to Israel, its proxy wars in Yemen and Syria, and its human rights abuses, but we must remember that the Iranian regime isn't the same as the Iranian people, many of whom expressed sympathy with the American people after we suffered the horrific attack on September 11.

In fact, the Iranian Government issued a surprisingly strong statement of condemnation of the terrorists responsible after the September 11 attack.

There was even some hope after those statements that our two nations might work together on other shared interests, although unfortunately, other than the historic nuclear agreement, that has not come to pass.

Nevertheless, I think it is important that we pause and reaffirm the statement made today by our State Department that condemns the attack in Iran

and expresses condolences for the families and victims.

I also think it is critical that we finally take some action here in the Congress to address Russia's attack on our election, which occurred more than 7 months ago.

We have overwhelming evidence of this historic attack—an attack that I liken to a cyber act of war.

The majority party here in Congress has done nothing to respond to Russia's aggression or to help protect America against any future such attack on our democracy.

President Trump still refuses to acknowledge the Russian attack—seemingly more interested in befriending the Russians and complaining about former Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Comey than convincingly telling Russia to never interfere in our election again or face the consequences.

This lack of resolve is truly an abdication of our national security responsibilities in Congress.

As one Polish security expert recently warned me, if the United States does not respond to the Russia attack on its own democracy, then Putin will feel emboldened and free to conduct further such attacks against other Western democracies.

Sadly, that has already proven true—just look at Russia's meddling in the recent French, German, and Dutch elections.

As we act to address Iran's troubling missile and destabilizing activity in the Middle East, including its continued threat against Israel, we must also act against Russia, which conducted a cyber act of war against our Nation.

We must ensure that existing sanctions placed on Russia for its destabilizing actions in Ukraine and Europe and its attack on our election are not lifted until such Russian actions are reversed or addressed.

I voted no on cloture today—out of respect for the Iranian people who suffered the horrific attack today and because I think it is long overdue for the Congress to finally respond to Russia's attack on our Nation—and stand prepared to support the final Iran sanctions bill after addressing these matters.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I yield the floor.

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

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, Donald Trump has decided to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement on climate change. This is a decision that may prove to be one of the worst foreign policy blunders in our Nation's history.

There is no denying the mounting threat of climate change. We observe rising seas, warming global temperatures, and melting glaciers and ice sheets. Yet the President cast aside a historic global agreement forged through American leadership.

Americans now ask what to do next. For individual citizens, my answer is simple: Take action. Join an environmental group. Support science and scientists. Organize in your community.

Many Americans have been publicly pledging to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement through movements like the "I am still in" pledge. Every action, big and small, counts.

American corporations must also act. Unfortunately, they have been AWOL in the politics of climate change. This has been so frustrating because so many of them have great climate principles. They just abandon them when they come to Washington. That is why, for my 169th "Time to Wake Up" speech, I have a message for corporate America:

First, know that you are hugely influential in Congress. You command extraordinary attention in our political system. This gives you a unique power against the Breitbart fake-news spigot, the shameless fossil fuel industry, and the Koch brothers' climate denial operation, which were all behind the President's fateful decision.

President Trump's brain-dead withdrawal from the Paris accord may prove to be for the best if it creates heightened political interest in climate action from American business leaders. At the moment, corporate political interests in climate action, setting the fossil fuel industry aside entirely, still averages out below zero.

As a Senator, I see corporate America's lobbying efforts in Congress firsthand. Here are some highlights:

Silicon Valley lobbies through an organization called TechNet. TechNet represents Goliaths, like Microsoft, Apple, Google, and Facebook, all of which have great climate policies. TechNet also represents clean energy companies, like Sunrun, Bloom Energy, and SolarCity.

TechNet came again this year to lobby Congress on its six priorities. Here is a page from the actual lobbying materials that TechNet brought to our meeting. The group's Federal policies are these: tax reform, high-skilled immigration reform, education and workforce development, entrepreneurship and job creation, smart infrastructure, and digital trade. Climate change did not make it onto TechNet's priorities list. Even clean energy failed to make it onto the list of the organization that includes Bloom Energy, SolarCity, and Sunrun.

This is not a matter of these giants being cowed by the Trump administration. TechNet came last year when Obama was President, and climate change was not on their agenda then, either. Indeed, the week TechNet came last year, I also had a visit from the

timber and lumber industry. Despite what climate change is doing to America's forests, climate change was not on the lumber and timber industry agenda.

That very same week, the property casualty insurance industry came to meet me. These insurance companies write the big checks when climate change sends Mother Nature haywire. Climate change was not mentioned by this industry, either. That was quite a week.

Big business lobbying on climate change is actually worse than zero because the big business trade associations and lobbying groups are often run by the fossil fuel industry. Green energy manufacturers, represented in Washington, DC, by the National Association of Manufacturers, will find their own association lined up against them on climate change. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is one of climate action's most implacable enemies, despite the good climate policies of so many companies on its board.

These lobby groups are the most persistent voices of America's business community here in Congress. They are the ones who are most active, and they are constant enemies on clean energy and climate action—despite the companies they represent—because, in truth, they answer to the fossil fuel industry, not the business community, when it comes to climate change.

Here is how this can play out. Coca-Cola and PepsiCo are the two biggest beverage companies in America. Both have excellent climate policies. Pepsi even supports Ceres, a fledgling business lobbying group for climate action, but their trade association, the American Beverage Association, takes no lobbying interest in climate change. It knows how to lobby. We can see the lobbying expenditures run up in 2009 and 2010, when they were concerned about Congress's taxing sweetened drinks or corn syrup. It just takes no interest in climate issues.

Worse, Coke and Pepsi run money through the American Beverage Association to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Add their lobbying all up, and Coke and Pepsi do virtually nothing themselves. A few ounces of credit go to Pepsi for supporting Ceres. Their American Beverage Association trade group doesn't lift a finger to help, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is a brute force adversary.

The result is that the net lobbying presence of Coke and Pepsi in Congress on climate change is exactly opposed to the two companies' stated policies on climate change. They say one thing; their lobbying effort does the opposite.

On the other side of the fossil fuel divide, the heavy political hand of the fossil fuel industry is felt constantly around here, and that heavy hand is mercilessly opposed to any climate action and enforces its will with a parade of political weaponry akin to those old Soviet May Day parades of tanks, rockets, and artillery. Cross them, and they

come after you hard. Ask former Congressman Bob Inglis. He urged his fellow Republicans to heed the climate science and was hammered for it.

Also, no one should buy the phony assertions by Big Oil CEOs that they recognize that climate change is real and support putting a price on carbon. They say that. ExxonMobil's CEO said that to his shareholders again just last week.

In the Senate, I am the Senate author of a carbon price bill. I know who is lobbying where on carbon prices, and I can tell you their statement is just not true. Every single element of that Soviet May Day parade of fossil fuel political weaponry is dead set against any such thing. What do we conclude from that? Either Big Oil's CEOs don't know what their own lobbying apparatus is doing, or they are just not telling the truth. You guess which.

The strategy of the fossil fuel industry has been to control the Republican Party. You can jam things up by jamming up one party, and you can make it look like it is a partisan issue when it is just old-fashioned, self-interested lobbying. In order to accomplish that purpose, the worst of the political threats and blandishments of the fossil fuel industry are directed against Republicans.

As long as legitimate corporate leaders in America sit idly by while fossil fuel terrorizes and corrupts the Republican Party, there will not be much progress. "But, oh," some will say, "there aren't Republicans who will respond. This is too partisan an issue. It will be a wasted effort." Not so. I came to the Senate in 2007, and for years there was bipartisan action on climate change—2007, 2008, 2009.

It only stopped when the fossil fuel industry secured from five Republican-appointed Justices on the Supreme Court the disgraceful Citizens United decision of 2010. In 2007, lots of bipartisan activity; 2008, lots of bipartisan activity; 2009, lots of bipartisan activity; 2010, Citizens United—dead stop. That Citizens United decision is what started the fossil fuel Soviet May Day parade of unprecedented political artillery. No special interest had that kind of political artillery before Citizens United opened it up, and much of the post-Citizens United effort has been using dark money to hide the fossil fuel industry's hand.

Since Citizens United, there has been no bipartisan climate action, but that doesn't mean there aren't still Republicans willing to work with us. I know this firsthand. There are Republicans willing to work with us. They just need to know somebody will give them safe passage through the political kill zone that Citizens United has let the fossil fuel industry create. Well, with the Trump administration now all the way over in the "fossil fuel, Breitbart, Koch brothers climate denial corner," it now rests on the shoulders of the legitimate business community to come off the sidelines. They can't count on this ad-

ministration. They now have to come off the sidelines themselves and do so in strength commensurate with the seriousness of the problem.

If, as a country, we pitch ourselves and the world into the present worst-case climate change scenarios, billions of people will suffer, and suffering people want answers and justice. It will become hard to defend to them our American system of democratic government against charges of corruption and our system of market capitalism against charges of indifference. Government has been corrupted by fossil fuel interests, and too many companies are indifferent. You can't make a case without the facts to back it up, and American companies, more than anyone else, benefit from a world order where liberal democracies prevail. So the stakes for the American business community are very real.

The political mischief of the fossil fuel industry and its front groups will leave a lasting stain on the democracy we all treasure. It is time, in the wake of the President's decision on Paris—isolating America with Syria as our companion in isolation—it is time that the decent and honorable business community played a meaningful role in setting this right. To them, I say: Trump has betrayed you so now is the time to align your industry's political engagement with your industry's position on climate. That is not asking much. We are only asking that American corporations align their political engagement on climate change with their actual position on climate change. If you take climate change seriously, great. Take it seriously when you come to Congress. The United States of America, where 1 day after D-day—a day when Americans stormed ashore to free the continent of Europe, fought their way through to knock down Nazi tyranny, and then rebuilt Europe under the Marshall Plan and came home—that country ought not to be a pariah nation with Syria.

We needn't be a banana republic for fossil fuel. We can lead the world into a brighter, cleaner, safer energy future, but it will take an effort. So, corporate America, let's make the effort.

I yield the floor.

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

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

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MARSHALL PLAN

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, it is nice to see the Presiding Officer in the Chair. Because he is a student of history, I know it will come as no surprise to my colleague from Colorado that this week marks the 70th anniversary of the Marshall Plan.

In 1947, Europe was in ruins. After years of war, factories from Man-

chester to Munich had been bombed out. Railroads laid disfigured from artillery. Farms stood defaced by the tracks of a thousand tanks. Across the continent, Europe's once humming economies stood silent. Over 60 million people had died, including 6 million Jews who were killed in the Holocaust.

Here in the United States, we mourned the loss of over 400,000 of our soldiers. We had spent, in today's dollars, nearly \$4 trillion to secure that victory in World War II. But to secure the peace, our leaders understood that even more was required of us. Truman's Secretary of State, George Marshall, told the Nation that without a return to "normal economic health in the world," there could be "no assured peace." In other words, if famine and poverty remained unchecked across Europe, unanswered, fascism and communism would soon follow, threatening U.S. interests and global stability at the same time.

So after years of sacrifice—sacrifice that this generation of Americans, thank goodness, has never had to endure—the easy course would have been to withdraw behind the Atlantic and the Pacific, turn our back on the world, and embrace isolation.

Instead, we proposed the Marshall Plan, a bold investment to revive Europe's economies, modernize industry, and expand trade, not only for allies like France and Britain but also for our enemies, Germany and Italy. It was extraordinary that political leaders here once made those decisions. I struggle to think of a time in human history when the victor helped to revive the vanquished with no strings attached, no colonial objective.

As the Marshall Plan made its way through Congress, leaders in Washington made the case to the American people, even standing firm against some who wanted to require European countries to buy only American products with the aid that we gave them. Still in the years to come, American farmers and manufacturers would fill millions of crates of wheat and wood, of sugar and steel to rebuild Europe from the ravages of war.

President Truman understood that, in time, strong European economies would become strong trading partners, strong military allies, and a bulwark of freedom against Soviet expansion. History proved him right, to say the least.

After the Marshall Plan, Western Europe surged back to life as Eastern Europe stagnated behind the Iron Curtain. In the West, production rose and hunger fell. Foes became friends. Bonds across the Atlantic solidified. Investments through the Marshall Plan helped lay the foundation for NATO, the common market, and the European Union.

Few actions in our foreign policy have been as consequential for America's long-term interests, for our national interests, and all at a cost of \$150 billion in today's dollars—25 times less than the total cost of World War II

and about 25 times less than what we paid in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As President Truman invested in Europe's recovery, he also helped fashion a new world order from the rubble of war. American leadership forged global institutions to enshrine our interests and values around the world for generations, giving rise to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, and the entire international system that we have today.

Seventy years ago, President Truman had the vision to think longer term. He had the wisdom to see that what was good for others was often good for us as well. And he had the courage to ask our citizens to lead, to sacrifice, and to believe that even after the second war in a generation, it was still within their power to shape a lasting peace.

Those actions, those qualities are why Truman's Presidency marks one of the finest periods in American foreign policy in the history of our foreign policy. The comparison with what we are seeing today just couldn't be starker.

Under the banner of putting America first, President Trump has undermined our interests at nearly every turn. At a time when China proposes to spend over a trillion dollars to expand its global influence with new railroads from Hungary to Kenya, new bridges and tunnels linking Southeast Asia together, and new electrical plants to power Pakistan, President Trump proposes to slash our foreign assistance advancing U.S. interests around the world. At a time when NATO faces challenges to its east and south, President Trump publicly rebukes the alliance and refuses to reinforce its bedrock principle of collective security.

As the recent terrorist attack unfolded in London, President Trump took to Twitter to promote his political agenda and sow fear in the wake of that attack. In the face of challenges like extremism and instability that demand 40-year strategies like the ones President Truman had in mind, President Trump is conducting his foreign policy 140 characters at a time.

Now, as the world unites to confront the perils of climate change, our President has withdrawn from the landmark Paris Agreement, which we helped forge, in a shameful abdication of America's global leadership. In doing so, the President ignored the voices of millions of Americans and thousands of businesses, urging him—against the arguments that he made—to stay in the agreement for climate reasons, for economic reasons, and for national security reasons as well. By withdrawing from it, the President has turned his back on millions of people across the globe, as well, mostly the poor, who are already on the edge of crisis, who may face drought, displacement, and famine from a warming planet.

America has a strong interest in avoiding that future. Anybody who has seen what has happened since the Arab

Spring understands what resulted from a doubling of the price of wheat in Egypt. A wise leader could see that. A President Truman would see that.

Like the Marshall Plan, the Paris Agreement recognized that in the modern world there is no “over there” anymore. Today, over there is here, and here is over there, and our President fundamentally doesn't understand it.

He claimed that withdrawing from the Paris Agreement would “put America first.” In fact, this move threatens to put America last—last in innovation, last in clean energy, last in science, last in our moral responsibility to hand the next generation a safe and stable planet. That is why States and cities all across the country are making their own commitments to honor the Paris Agreement.

Now it is just us, Nicaragua, and Syria on the other side. That is why towns, cities, and States all across the country are scrambling to fill the void of leadership left by the administration to show the rest of the world that we are serious too.

In my home State of Colorado, we know that we can protect our economy and our climate, that we can grow our economy and protect our climate. We see those as linked together. You can't do one without the other. We developed the first State limits on methane pollution. We passed the first voter-led renewable standard in the entire Nation. We established our own limits on carbon pollution. And in the process, we have created 13,000 renewable energy jobs, with wind jobs alone expected to triple by 2020. On average, those jobs pay a salary of \$50,000. We are manufacturing again in our State with the supply chains that come along with it.

What comes with those commonsense regulations? One of the strongest economies in America, the lowest unemployment rate in America, and we see this all across the country. New energy jobs are growing 12 times faster than the overall economy. The President doesn't see any of that.

In a matter of months, from foreign assistance, to global alliances, to terrorism and climate change, the administration has imperiled America's stature with a shortsighted and willfully ignorant agenda that is profoundly out of step with the realities of the world and the interests of the people of the United States.

In a recent op-ed, senior officials from the administration painted the world as no more than an “arena” where nations “compete for advantage.” They were trying to explain the President's behavior while he was in Europe. That attitude marks a huge departure from generations of American foreign policy. This is not about the Obama administration; this is about a set of traditional American values and approaches to the world that we have had almost since the Nation's founding, and the space the President is creating out there in the world by abandoning those treasured

American values gives space to those who seek every single day to undermine the liberal world order that has allowed our country and allies across the globe to succeed.

The President should understand that generations of leaders in the United States have put America first. They have always put America first—not in slogans or stump speeches but in the alliances and institutions we built, the values we champion, the alliances we forged that have given our world 70 years of peace and prosperity. That is a legacy upon which we must build—one that has put America first and has kept America first today and, if we act wisely, I think for decades to come.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). The Senator from Kansas.

(The remarks of Mr. MORAN are printed in today's RECORD during consideration of S. Res. 174.)

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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. CASEY. 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. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

HEALTHCARE REFORM

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the destructive path that the majority is headed down with their attempts to repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

The Republican bill, and, frankly, the House Republican bill that the Senate is now considering in addition to other ideas is, in my judgment, not really a healthcare bill but a tax cut bill. It is a tax cut bill for the super-rich—not only the rich but, literally, the wealthiest few Americans—while increasing costs for middle-class families. It gives States the option to allow insurance companies to discriminate again like they did before the ACA was passed. It would also allow those same policies to devastate our hospitals, particularly those in rural communities. I live in a State where 48 out of 67 counties are, in fact, rural counties.

The Republican bill would rip away healthcare, according to the Congressional Budget Office, from 23 million Americans. Here is what that means in Pennsylvania, based upon the Congressional Budget Office numbers: Up to 770,000 Pennsylvanians could lose health insurance by 2026 if the bill were to pass, 48,000 Pennsylvania seniors on Medicare could lose access to services covered by Medicaid, and 52,600 Pennsylvanians with disabilities could lose Medicaid coverage. I live in a State

where, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, over 722,000 Pennsylvanians with disabilities rely on Medical Assistance for their medical care. Medical Assistance is the State version of Medicaid. We know that if you are a child, if you are a senior, or if you have a disability, many Americans in those categories, of course, rely upon Medicaid.

We also know, based upon the CBO numbers, that 180,000 Pennsylvanians could lose access to mental health and substance abuse care now provided by Medicaid. We have heard a lot of talk, and there has been a lot of work, actually, in this body, as well as in the other body, in the last year on the opioid problem. We have Democrats and Republicans focusing on a major national problem, an urgent public health problem. We have made some progress—not enough but some good progress—on opioid legislation. All of that would be badly undermined if we made the changes to Medicaid that some want to make here because of the significant impact that cuts to Medicaid would have on the challenge of reducing the opioid crisis.

So even the possibility that this bill might become law is, in a sense, destabilizing to the healthcare marketplace, which has been better each year we move forward from the passage of the ACA in 2010.

Just last week, the Pennsylvania Insurance Department announced average proposed rate increases for health insurance premiums for 2018. Here is what the Pennsylvania Insurance Department told us. If we maintain current law, premiums will go up 8.8 percent in Pennsylvania. If the Republicans get rid of the cost-sharing subsidies, which many seem either to want to get rid of or to want to ignore, thereby creating uncertainty—if those cost-sharing subsidies are thrown out the window—premiums will go up 2.5 times as much, by over 20 percent. So far, it is 8.8 percent under current law or 20 percent just based upon the cost-sharing subsidies being taken away.

Also, if the individual mandate is repealed, premiums will go up almost three times as much, by 23 percent. If we get rid of both the cost-sharing subsidies and the individual mandate, premiums in our State will go up by over 36 percent.

So we have a basic choice to make, at least as it relates to Pennsylvania. Under current law, it is 8.8 percent, and we should try to bring that down. I think there are ways we could work together in a bipartisan fashion to bring that down. But if we go in the direction that many want to go—especially on the Republican side—to undermine or to do nothing about cost-sharing and get to rid of the individual mandate, premiums go up 36 percent. So folks can make their choice to go up about 9 percent or to go up 36 percent. It is a real simple choice with basically two options.

The bill that was passed in the House would destroy the lives of many vul-

nerable Pennsylvanians. What should we do about it? Well, the first thing we should do with the bill is to throw it in the trash heap. That is where it belongs, and I hope that is where Senate Republicans are headed and that they are going to start over on a new bill, because the bill that was passed in the House is very bad for the country.

Among the 3 million Pennsylvanians with preexisting conditions are two remarkable young women whose mother first contacted me in 2009. Stacie Ritter, from Manheim, PA, is the mom of four children, including her twin daughters, Hannah and Madeline, who are depicted here in this picture when they were much younger. Hannah and Madeline were diagnosed with a rare and dangerous type of leukemia when they were just 4 years old. You can see their picture there at that time.

Stacy and her husband Benjamin went bankrupt trying to pay their daughters' medical bills. She wrote to me at the time, saying that without healthcare reform, "my girls will be unable to afford care, that is if they are eligible, for care that is critically necessary to maintain this chronic condition."

Fortunately, things have changed in the last 8 or so years. Fortunately, Hannah and Madeline are healthy young women now. They are freshman at Arcadia University and are doing well. They rely on the Affordable Care Act's protections to ensure that they have access to affordable coverage, whether they are on their parents' plan or purchasing a plan in the individual market. As you can see on my left, this is a picture of Hannah and Madeline today as college freshmen.

Without the Affordable Care Act, Hannah and Madeline could be denied health insurance. As their mom said, they could be "punished and rejected because they had the misfortune of developing cancer as a child."

The Republican bill passed in the House would put them at risk of being denied health insurance or being charged more because they are cancer survivors.

I don't know why anyone would support a bill that would do that.

Just a number of months ago I received a letter from Pam Simpson from Chester County, PA. Pam and her son Rowan have their story to tell. Rowan is 5 years old, and a number of years ago he was diagnosed with autism. I have talked about Rowan before on this floor and in other places and what Medicaid means for Rowan and his family. Medicaid provides important services for Rowan and others with disabilities, enabling Rowan to go to preschool and allowing his mother to work. Here is what his mom said to me. I won't read the whole letter, but I will just highlight the first page.

The first page is Rowan's life before he was diagnosed with autism—all of the challenges that he and his family had—and Rowan's life after the diagnosis of autism, but, then, ultimately,

when he received Medicaid, or Medical Assistance, as we call it in Pennsylvania. Here is what his mom told me in the letter after he received word that he was going to be enrolled in Medical Assistance:

Late January 2016, I applied for Medicaid.

That is Medical Assistance.

After Rowan was awarded Medical Assistance, we were able to obtain wrap-around services. These services included a Behavioral Specialist Consultant and a Therapeutic Staff Support worker.

She goes on later in that paragraph to say that these wrap-around services "have been a Godsend."

Then she goes on later and says:

I am thrilled by Rowan's daily progress. I cannot say enough good things about this program.

Then she says:

Without Medical Assistance, I am confident that I could not work full time to support our family. Our family would be bankrupt or my son would go without the therapies he sincerely needs.

Here is the last line of her letter:

We are desperately in need of Rowan's Medical Assistance and would be devastated if we lost these benefits.

She is referencing "Medical Assistance" for Medicaid, the same program at the State level.

So we have two families now that are totally reliant on these programs, either the ACA more broadly or, in particular, the Medicaid Program. Both families have referenced bankruptcy because of healthcare challenges in the life of that family—one who would be on the brink of bankruptcy, Rowan's family, and the other, who actually went through bankruptcy because of those healthcare challenges. No family in the United States of America should have to worry about going bankrupt because of a healthcare problem. We are well on our way to solving these problems, and no one should pull the rug out from under those families. But, unfortunately, when it comes to this legislation, that is exactly what could happen to many of them.

I will give a third example: Alex. Recently I met Alex, who is from Southeastern Pennsylvania. He is 9 years old, and he has Down syndrome. Here is what Alex, a 9-year-old, wrote:

Although I have a medical diagnosis of Down Syndrome, I am an excellent student. I get 100 percent on my spelling tests and I get picked as the Math King quite often. . . . My parents, my teachers, and everyone around me thought from the beginning there was nothing that I could not do. . . . I am able to get a good education because of the supports that I get from Special Education. That's why I am very concerned about the possible cuts in Medicaid funding in schools. . . . Medicaid funding in schools is a very, very important part of what makes it possible for us to receive successful education in school and become contributing members of our society.

That is a 9-year-old in Pennsylvania reminding us about this important program. Alex has tremendous potential that would be in jeopardy by the proposed cuts to Medicaid.

Here is another example: Peg Fagan of Pennsylvania. The Republican bill includes an age tax that will allow insurers to charge older Americans up to five times more than younger Americans. Peg is from Bucks County, in Southeastern Pennsylvania. She is a three-time cancer survivor who could not afford health insurance prior to the Affordable Care Act. She is approaching Medicare eligibility but still has a few years to go before she is old enough to enroll.

Peg was able to find affordable health insurance thanks to the ACA, but under the Republican bill, she could once again be discriminated against for being an older adult, and another possible object of discrimination would be that she is a cancer survivor.

That was the old law. That is where we were before, where insurance companies were allowed under the law to discriminate in that fashion. They could discriminate against you because you were a woman. They could discriminate against you because you had a preexisting condition. They could discriminate against you because you were a cancer survivor or because of your age, or so many other circumstances. I thought we were beyond that. I thought we had finally cured that problem, but some want to go back in time.

So the CBO tells us that the Republican bill would rip away healthcare from 23 million Americans. I just went through some Pennsylvania stories. We have a lot more, and my colleagues will be hearing them. But for Hannah and Madeline and Rowan and Alex and Peg, we should ask ourselves a couple of basic questions. Healthcare for those Pennsylvanians should not be made worse, and they should not be made worse off, in order to give the top one-tenth of 1 percent a \$200,000 giveaway. That is what the first version of the House healthcare bill would do. It would give the top one-tenth of 1 percent an average tax cut of \$197,000. I exaggerated; I said \$200,000. Let's be exact. It is \$197,000 each. Why would we take away healthcare or even risk or create uncertainty about healthcare for Hannah, Madeline, Rowan, Alex, and Peg because some people around here want to give tax cuts to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars to very wealthy people? That is not what I call a healthcare bill.

The Senate has an obligation, in my judgment—both parties—to stop this bill from being enacted into law. We cannot allow this legislation to pass or anything like it to become law. So I ask each Member of the Senate to consider these Pennsylvanians and plenty in your home States and the countless more like them who are anxiously hoping and praying this Congress will not vote to take away their healthcare.

DRUG AND VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS

Mr. President, I rise to express my support for the drug and other treatment courts, including veterans treatment courts, in Pennsylvania and the more than 3,000 across the Nation.

Just last month during National Drug Court Month, drug courts across the country held graduation ceremonies to recognize individuals who completed this rigorous treatment program. These courts, which serve about 150,000 people a year, hold offenders with substance use and mental health disorders accountable for their actions through strict supervision while also connecting them to the treatment they need. More than 1.25 million people have successfully graduated from drug and treatment court programs and are now on a path to recovery.

Research has demonstrated that drug and other treatment courts not only reduce crime but also reduce spending by slowing the cycle of recidivism. Drug and other treatment courts are also an important resource to law enforcement and community stakeholders working to combat the opioid epidemic. Opioid addiction is a growing public health crisis in Pennsylvania and throughout the Nation, and it demands real action. As public officials, we have an obligation to ensure that the resources and policies are in place to fight this scourge so that more families won't have to endure the heartache of losing a loved one to addiction.

Veterans treatment courts are innovative and collaborative programs to address some of the unique challenges that face our veteran communities. There are approximately 22 million veterans in the United States, and Pennsylvania is home to nearly 1 million. The majority of veterans return to our communities as leaders and lead exemplary lives; however, not every veteran's path is straightforward. That is why we need to make sure the right programs and support services are in place.

According to the Department of Justice, in 2011 and 2012, approximately 8 percent of the total incarcerated population in the United States were, in fact, veterans. These veterans found themselves serving time in correctional facilities because they had not received the treatment they needed. While this represents a very small percentage of veterans, it is important that we support programs like veterans treatment courts for veterans who face significant obstacles returning to civilian life, including mental health concerns, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse issues. These treatment courts can have a lifelong impact on a veteran by helping them get out of the criminal justice system and get the necessary treatment they have earned. It is our obligation to work every day to ensure veterans are receiving the care and support they deserve.

There are many stories from across Pennsylvania and our country that exemplify why these veterans treatment courts are critical. Just to give one, shortly after Michael Colletti from Montgomery County received an honorable discharge from the U.S. Coast Guard, he found himself in the grips of

a serious addiction to opioids. To support his growing habit, Michael began stealing from his employer, resulting in his arrest and jail time. His crimes were caused by his opioid use disorder, and Michael found himself in the Montgomery County Veterans Treatment Court.

Finally, getting the accountability he needed and connecting with the benefits he earned as a veteran, Michael began the process of leaving behind his life of addiction and crime to start a new path. Today, Michael Colletti is a partner in a successful small business and a mentor to others in his community struggling with their own substance use.

He says of the veterans treatment court:

I wouldn't be here without the support network from the court. I wouldn't have my girlfriend, I wouldn't have my beautiful place, I wouldn't have my career, and most importantly, I wouldn't have the sound clarity of mind to be myself again. Now I am committed to paying it forward.

I and I know many others are proud to support a recent letter led by our colleagues, Senator KLOBUCHAR and Senator WICKER, highlighting the importance of funding the Drug Court Discretionary Grant Program and veterans treatment courts. As we go through the appropriations process, I urge my colleagues to consider the proven track record of these courts in improving outcome for graduates, and I hope Congress will offer strong support for these important programs that have been helping the justice system better serve individuals, veterans, their families, friends, and communities.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

BUDGET SCOREKEEPING REPORT

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I wish to submit to the Senate the budget scorekeeping report for June 2017. The report compares current-law levels of spending and revenues with the amounts the Senate agreed to in the budget resolution for fiscal year 2017, S. Con. Res. 3. This information is necessary for the Senate Budget Committee to determine whether budget points of order lie against pending legislation. The Republican staff of the Senate Budget Committee and the Congressional Budget Office, CBO, prepared this report pursuant to section 308(b) of the Congressional Budget Act, CBA.

My last filing can be found in the RECORD on April 27, 2017. The information contained in this report captures