

degree in social work and works part time at Liberty Resources, Incorporated, one of Pennsylvania's independent living centers.

Like German, Latoya is a successful young professional because she works hard and takes advantage of the opportunities presented to her. She has support from Medicaid in the form of direct support professionals who help her with her daily tasks. Without Medicaid, the wheelchair and other medical equipment she needs and her direct care workers, Latoya would not be able to work, attend school, and care for her son.

While I was talking with Latoya, she told me: "Medicaid makes it possible for me to live a regular, full, productive life, to be a parent, to go to school, and to be a reliable employee."

While talking with her, it was clear that Latoya was proud of her son and proud to be his mother. She was clear that the support she receives from Medicaid makes it possible for her to be that proud parent.

She closed her remarks by saying that Medicaid "makes it possible for me to be me."

My last example is Karen Stauffer. Karen Stauffer is from Bucks County, PA. She is a small business owner. She operates the River of Life Natural Foods store. Karen purchased her healthcare policy from the Pennsylvania Affordable Care Act exchange. She said to me that prior to the passage of the ACA, she saw her healthcare premiums increase from \$300 a month in the late 1990s to \$1,300 in the mid-2000s. She said to me that because of preexisting conditions such as high blood pressure and a long bout of Lyme disease, she was worried she would lose her healthcare. She said passage of the ACA was both an emotional and financial relief for her. Her premiums were reduced to \$500 a month after being as high as \$1,300, and she knew she had the protection of the law when it came to nondiscrimination because of her preexisting conditions.

As she spoke, she shared her fears from what she has been hearing about the House bill and what might come out of the Senate; that, at 61 years of age, her premiums could be five times that of younger policyholders and that the meager subsidies proposed by the Republican majority would make healthcare unaffordable for her. She said to me: I am frankly terrified about what could happen to me in the next 4 years. My income has gone down, I have preexisting conditions, and instead of making adjustments and improvements to the ACA, legislators are causing insurers to become concerned about the future.

Karen was distraught when talking about the future and reminded me that "we all could be one accident or illness away from disaster." That is what Karen said.

So German, Karen, and Latoya, I think, give us a lot to think about. I hope the majority, when they are mak-

ing the final edits to their bill, will make sure that any American with Medicaid, for example, who has it now—a child who comes from a low-income family, an adult or child with a disability or a senior trying to get into a nursing home—if they have Medicaid today and need it in the future, that there would be a guarantee that they don't lose their Medicaid, that they don't lose it this year or 5 years from now or 10 years from now, or longer. Stretching it out over many years and eliminating that coverage year after year, a little bit each year, is going to be just as bad in the long run.

I hope the majority would think of those families and the families in their own States when they are considering healthcare legislation in the Senate. We should have a vote only if there is a hearing on this legislation or, frankly, more than one hearing to consider something this complicated.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

PRAYERS FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BASEBALL PRACTICE SHOOTING

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, yesterday we had a horrific tragedy here in the capital area. I know I speak for all of my colleagues who are holding the victims of that attack in their hearts and in their prayers: Congressman STEVE SCALISE, still in critical condition; Zack Barth, legislative correspondent who works for Congressman WILLIAMS of Texas, who was injured; Matt Mika of Tyson's Foods, who represents them here on the Hill; and two of our police officers, David Bailey and Crystal Griner of the U.S. Capitol Police. Without those two police officers present, this could have been a much more tragic event.

We have to reinforce the understanding that we are blessed to have the opportunity to raise our voices in our democratic Republic. We are able to raise them by speaking to our members who are elected in local and State and Federal Government, by writing to them, by meeting with them in town-halls. In my State, you can call them up, and they will sit down with you in a cafe. We have an opportunity to weigh in through writing letters to the editor, by protesting in the streets, by overflowing the email lines and flooding the phone lines. We have all kinds of ways to weigh in, in America, but violence is absolutely unacceptable. We have to try to diminish and eliminate the hate speech, which so often becomes the foundation for hate violence.

We have had a very divisive 18 months here in America, where various folks have sought to increase the divisions between groups of Americans, to attack women, to attack African Americans, to attack Hispanics, to attack Muslims, to attack LGBT citizens. We need to eliminate that strategy of division.

Here, in America, we are a tapestry of talents from all over the world, of different cultural backgrounds who

come together to make this Nation incredibly strong. Unless you are 100 percent Native American, you are either an immigrant yourself or the son or daughter of immigrants. We bring that diversity to bear and we make this Nation powerful in ways few other nations could even come close to having.

Let's take this as a moment in which we seek to encourage public participation in all the legitimate forms of free speech but put hate speech out of bounds and hate violence out of bounds.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. President, it is ironic that this conversation takes place at a moment where we really have a unique process underway designed to limit political discourse. Everything I am saying about participation assumes you will have a chance to weigh in, whether you are elected or whether you are a citizen.

We have a process in the Senate that is designed to prevent the citizens of America from weighing in and to prevent debate by the Members of the Senate. That is not acceptable. It is not acceptable that in a "we the people" constitutional republic, a democratic republic designed to facilitate conversation and dialogue to produce decisions that reflect the will of the people, that work for all Americans—instead, we have a secretive process, more the type of process you would expect in a kingdom where the King and the counselors hide themselves away, with no public input, and make decisions for the masses. That is not the design of our government. Our government is designed for public input.

Here is a phrase that should resonate: no public input, no vote; no hearing, no vote.

I am speaking specifically about the dialogue on TrumpCare. TrumpCare, which was passed by just a few votes in the House and came to the Senate, doesn't reflect a process of the people, by the people, and for the people. In fact, it is by the privileged, for the privileged, and by the privileged.

The House deliberately excluded the public. They had their own consolidated, confined process to make sure it was difficult to have a full debate and an amendment process, for folks to weigh in and consider alternatives and improvements.

Here we are in the Senate, and it is even worse because we have the secret 13 crafting a plan, planning and plotting to bring it to the floor of the Senate probably 2 weeks from today in order to hold a vote, with only a few hours of debate and no committee process of any kind—not a single committee hearing, not a single committee opportunity to consider amendments—and no chance for the public to get a copy and read through it and weigh in with their Members of the Senate. There is no chance for healthcare stakeholders and experts to examine it and point out the difficulties and the flaws. What I think is most egregious

of all is the complete exclusion of the United States of America. It is unacceptable.

I was fascinated by the fact that the majority decided to have this secret 13 committee. Thirteen is considered to be an unlucky number by much of America—Friday the 13th or buildings that don't have a 13th floor. In this case, I hope that having 13 Members meet in secret is unlucky; that is, unlucky in terms of trying to fulfill their mission of passing a bill with no input by the public.

Last week, the majority leader started the process to make this happen without a committee. It is called the rule XIV process. It is a process designed to bring up a healthcare bill that would rip healthcare coverage from millions of Americans and, by the way, give away billions of dollars to the richest Americans, all in the same bill, straight to the Senate floor without a committee being involved—not the Finance Committee, which certainly has many elements related to the financing of healthcare in America, and not the HELP Committee, which has Members of both parties who have worked for years to develop expertise and consult with stakeholders to understand what works and what doesn't work, and they benefit from each other's input.

I was part of the HELP Committee in 2009. For 5 weeks we sat in a room with a television camera operating so the public could see what we were doing, and we proposed amendments and debated them around this big square set of tables. There was full public scrutiny. There was 5 weeks of bipartisan dialogue about what should go in healthcare. That was 2009. The Finance Committee had a very similar process.

But now we have a different objective by the majority leader wanting to bring this bill with no Finance Committee involvement, no HELP Committee involvement, and no citizen involvement. In fact, there is no chance for Senators who aren't in the secret circle to participate and see the bill and hold townhalls and ask people what they think of this.

I do a lot of townhalls. I am doing a couple more this weekend. I have had 20 townhalls this year. I have had a townhall an average of every 10 days since I was elected in 2000 and came to the Senate in 2009. I am going to keep holding these townhalls.

I know that my citizens would like to see this bill and be able to go through the elements and give me feedback on what makes sense and what doesn't. That is a "we the people" democratic republic. This secrecy strategy—that is not. That is not. That is a strategy for nonconstitutional governments. That is a strategy for dictators. That is a strategy for Kings and Queens. That is a strategy for people who hate democracy.

Let's not have that process in the United States. Let's have colleagues from both sides of the aisle go to the

leadership and say: This is unacceptable. I want my citizens to have a chance to see this bill. I want to benefit from talking to the hospitals in my community and my State and get their feedback. I want to talk to the healthcare clinics and get their feedback. I want to talk to the doctors and find out what they think. I want to hear from the nurses because they are so respected in their understanding of the direct delivery of healthcare.

That is what every Member of the Senate should be saying to our majority leader. This process of secrecy, no debate, and the public being excluded is totally unacceptable.

Why is this process going on? In fact, earlier today, the secret 13 went into a room off a hallway where the press is not allowed so they couldn't be seen coming and going from the room. When they were coming and going from the room, they couldn't be talked to by the press. Why all this secrecy? It boils down to this: They know the American people don't like what is in this bill. They are terrified of getting that feedback. If they get that feedback, they might lose a majority in passing this bill.

How much public support is there for the TrumpCare bill? Just 21 percent, according to a recent Quinnipiac poll. That is not very much support for it.

Even President Trump said TrumpCare is terrible. He said it this way: That bill from the House is "mean." That was his exact quote, that it is "mean." Then he used another phrase, which I won't repeat on the floor of the Senate, to say just how absolutely awful that bill is.

Today in committee, I asked the Secretary of Health, Tom Price: Do you share, as Secretary of Health, the President's opinion that his own bill, his own TrumpCare bill passed out of the House, is an absolutely terrible bill, a mean bill?

He didn't want to answer the question. Certainly, I found that curious, that the Secretary of Health will not tell us whether he shares the President's opinion.

Then I asked him: Why did the President call it a mean bill? Is it because it throws 20 million people out of healthcare?

The Secretary didn't want to answer.

Did the President say it was a mean bill because it eliminates the guarantee of essential health benefits so that an insurance policy is, in fact, insuring you when you get sick rather than perhaps not even being worth the paper it is printed on?

There were a lot of healthcare insurance policies before we had an essential care package, essential benefits package. You paid the insurance company, but when you got sick, they didn't cover anything. Those policies weren't worth the paper they were printed on.

So I asked the Secretary of Health: Is that the reason the President said this is a mean process or a mean bill? Is that the reason he described this bill in terms that I won't repeat on the floor?

The Secretary of Health wasn't interested in relaying or giving insights into why the President said it was a mean bill.

I asked: Is it because the bill destroys the guarantee that if you have preexisting conditions, you can still get a policy at the same price as everyone else?

Again, there was no answer.

I said: Or is it a mean bill because if you are an older American, you have to pay perhaps up to eight times more for the same policy as you pay under current law?

You know, an individual who is 64 years old, a man who is earning \$26,500 a year, currently that individual would pay about \$140 a month for a policy under current law. The same policy under TrumpCare would cost \$1,200 a month. Is there anyone in this Senate Chamber who thinks an individual earning \$26,500 a year can afford a healthcare policy that costs \$1,200 a month?

Let me translate this. If you are earning \$26,000 a year, you are earning a little over \$2,000 a month. Is there anyone in this Chamber who believes—please come to the floor and tell us if you do—that individual can buy a healthcare policy costing \$1,200 a month? Is there anyone who thinks it is an egregious mistake to use high pricing to force older Americans out of our healthcare system? I believe in treating our citizens of all ages graciously, not forcing them out of healthcare through an eightfold increase in their premiums. Is that the reason the President said that this healthcare bill, this TrumpCare bill from the House, is a mean bill and spoke of it in derogatory terms?

The TrumpCare bill isn't even popular in the President's own party. Just 48 percent of Republicans surveyed in the same poll supported President Trump and Speaker RYAN's healthcare plan. But when asked if they like the current healthcare plan, 55 percent said they do.

Right now, regular order, the regular legislative, deliberative process that makes sure there is a full debate before a significant bill comes to a vote, that makes sure there is significant and substantial time for the citizens of America to weigh in, that regular order or regular process is being run over by a steamroller. It is being crushed. It is being demolished. Why would my colleagues support destroying the fundamental principles of legislative debate? I would love to hear the answer. Perhaps it is because, like President Trump said, the bill is mean. Perhaps it is because it is extremely unpopular with the American people, who believe there should be affordable, quality healthcare available to every single American.

We have heard that the secret 13 have a plan to sweeten the bill, a little spoonful of sugar to make the medicine go down. What is that plan? Well, we are hearing that maybe they will put

in extra funds to help take on the opioid addiction epidemic. That is a good thing. Why have they fought so hard against supporting such programs to help Americans on this crucial question?

We have heard they want to slow down the process of throwing people off healthcare so it will not hurt them in the 2018 elections and maybe not even hurt them so much in the 2020 elections. But if you are destroying something piece by piece, you are still destroying it. If you are cooking a lobster and you turn up the heat fast or you turn up the heat slowly, you still kill the lobster. And this bill is still going to kill healthcare for millions of Americans. Doing it more slowly doesn't make it a good thing. Putting in a spoonful of sugar doesn't make a diabolical act better.

Franklin Roosevelt once said:

Let us never forget that government is ourselves.

And he continued:

The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and Senators and Congressmen and Government officials but the voters of this country.

And isn't that what "we the people" means—government of, by, and for the people? But nowhere in the Republican secret 13 process can the voices of the people of the United States be heard. How about if one of the 13 comes to the floor now and distributes the bill? I mean we should have weeks to consider this. We should have maybe a month to consider it. We had a whole year of process in 2009.

Wouldn't that be the right thing to do, to clue in folks about what is in this bill so we can get the stakeholders engaged and the citizens engaged and hold those townhalls and get that feedback? Wouldn't that be the right thing to do?

Well, unfortunately, we are still waiting. We are still paused, saying: Please, bring the bill to the floor. Distribute it. Maybe it is not your final draft, but that is OK.

We had draft after draft after draft of the healthcare bill in 2009. We had, in the Senate Finance Committee, 53 hearings on healthcare reform. They spent 8 days marking up their version of the ACA—the committee's longest markup in 22 years. During those 8 days, 135 amendments were considered—amendments from both Republicans and Democrats. Then, there was the HELP Committee, which I served on, and it held 47 bipartisan hearings, roundtables, and walkthroughs. There were 300 amendments during a month-long markup—one of the longest in the history of Congress. More than 100 Republican amendments, minority amendments, were accepted into the committee's version of healthcare reform.

Right here in this Chamber, we spent 25 days considering the bill before we voted—25 days considering a lot of floor amendments, a lot of floor time. Is there a single member of the major-

ity party who will commit to having at least 25 days of debate on the floor of the Senate so we can get a full vetting of the issues, so we can get full input by the citizens of the United States of America?

Well, I am concerned that we are not on the path that values the construction of our government, our constitutional "we the people" government. I am concerned and afraid we are on a path where powerful special interests meeting secretly with 13 Members of the Senate are crafting a bill that is great for the powerful and the privileged but in fact is terrible for Americans, and that is why they are so afraid to show us the bill.

So this is unacceptable, and we need the citizens of America to pay attention because why is this happening right now? Well, because the fact that this secret process is going on, it can be camouflaged by all the conversation about Russiagate—how much did the Russians interfere in our elections, and what about all those secret meetings by members of the campaign team, were they coordinating or collaborating? We don't know the answer, but that question is central to whether there was treasonous conduct undermining the integrity of our elections.

So let's do this now, the secret healthcare plan, with no debate while America is trying to fight for the fairness and integrity of our elections. Let's do it now when schools are out of session and we are in summer and people are on vacation. Let's sneak it through now, this act that strips healthcare for millions of Americans.

Here is the principle we should come back to: No hearing; no vote. No hearing; no vote. No vote on a piece of legislation that affects the lives of millions of American families if we haven't had due deliberation by the key committees. No vote on a bill that destroys healthcare for millions of families if we haven't had the chance to consult with the experts in healthcare—the nurses, doctors, hospitals, and clinics.

No hearing; no vote. No vote if we haven't had a full chance for the citizens of America to weigh in, to see the full details, and say what they like and what they don't like and share that with their respective Senators. On an issue of this magnitude, one that will affect the peace of mind and the health of millions of Americans, we need a full, thorough legislative process.

The choices that are made in this Chamber over the next few weeks will have a big impact on the quality of life of millions of American citizens. A provision that eliminates Medicaid expansion, the Oregon health plan expansion in my State, whether it is implemented slowly or implemented fast is going to rip healthcare from 400,000 Oregonians. That is enough Oregonians that if they were holding hands, they would stretch from the Pacific Ocean to Idaho, 400 miles across the State. That is a profound impact.

In addition, those folks who are going to the clinics and hospitals who don't have healthcare, they will not be able to pay for it. So the finances of the clinics and the hospitals will be dramatically hurt. I asked Secretary Price today: Is that the reason the President said the TrumpCare bill out of the House is a mean bill? Is that the reason he used a derogatory phrase to attack the TrumpCare bill out of the House? Is it because of the fact it will undermine the finances of the clinics and the hospitals.

He said: You know, I don't accept the premise that will happen.

Well, covering your eyes and covering your ears and pretending, on such an important issue, is not a responsible act by a Secretary of Health. The clinics have been coming to us and saying this is how our finances improved when our citizens were able to pay for the services because our rate of uncompensated care dropped dramatically and, with that income, we hired a lot more people.

I have a clinic in the northeast corner of our State where the number of people employed, they told me, doubled from 20-something to 50-something. They are able to provide a lot more healthcare in that local, rural community, and that is true in clinic after clinic.

If one would take their hands off their ears or off from in front of their eyes and listen to the presidents or the executive directors of rural hospitals, they would hear them say: This will really hurt us. This will hurt, not just our ability to provide care to those who will not have insurance, it will hurt our finances. It will diminish our care for everyone in this rural community. Everyone will be hurt by TrumpCare.

Is that what the President meant when he said this bill is mean? Well, if that is what he meant, if what he meant is it is mean because it rips healthcare from 20 million Americans, then I agree with the President. If when the President criticizes the TrumpCare bill as being mean, if he meant that because it was going to destroy the guarantee of access by folks with preexisting conditions, then I agree with him. If he said it because it will destroy essential benefits and allow there to be insurance policies that aren't worth the paper they are written on, then I agree with the President.

If it does, it is going to greatly increase the cost of insurance for older Americans, up to eightfold times. If that is why the President said it is mean, I agree with the President.

The President should weigh in and say: No secret process on a bill so important to the healthcare of millions of Americans. President Trump should weigh in and say: I don't want a bill that looks anything like that House bill because it is defective in this area, in this area, and in this area, hurting everybody in the communities, undermining the clinics, undermining the

hospitals, destroying insurance, destroying the opportunity of access for preexisting conditions, and ripping away the guarantee that essential benefits will be covered. That is what the President should do.

He thinks the bill is terrible because he finally looked at it. Well, he is going to think the bill crafted by the secret 13 is terrible too. He has a chance to stand up and fight for the American people and say: I will never sign a bill that goes through a secret process that excluded the insights from our rural hospitals, insights from our rural clinics, insights from our nurses, and insights from our doctors. I will never sign a bill in the Oval Office that excluded the American people from being allowed to weigh in on the conversation. I will never sign a major bill that hurts so many people in my Oval Office if it never had a committee hearing and never had amendments, never had a chance to go through the legislative process the way envisioned in our “we the people” Constitution. That would be the right thing for President Trump to do.

He has recognized the bill is profoundly flawed. He has a chance to—not only a flawed bill but a profoundly, unacceptable process in our constitutional democratic Republic.

Former Chief Justice Hughes said: We are here not as masters but as servants, not to glory in power, but to attest our loyalty to the commands and restrictions laid down by the people of the United States in whose name and by whose will we exercise our brief authority.

Each one of us is here for a short period of time, but we take our constitutional roles as Senators from the foundation of the power of the American people, the “we the people” Constitution. To exclude them from the process is to violate the very premise on which our Nation is founded.

So we have to stop this process. We have to stop it in its tracks. Whether you are a Democrat or Republican, whether you come from a rural State or a highly populated State, it is a responsibility to stop this process, return to regular legislative deliberation so that we can, in fact, have a “we the people” conversation, fully honoring the experts and the feedback from ordinary citizens across our Nation.

No hearing, no legislative deliberation, no vote. No hearing; no vote.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, once again, we have more bad news about ObamaCare. Last week, Anthem announced it will pull out of Ohio's health insurance exchange for 2018. That means that a minimum of 18 Ohio counties will be without an exchange insurer next year. Twenty-five Missouri counties are in the same boat, and more Americans are likely to find themselves in the same situation.

On June 2, the Omaha World-Herald announced that 100,000 Nebraskans could end up with zero options for individual coverage in 2018. Insurers have been pulling out of the exchanges right and left.

In February, Humana announced its decision to completely pull out of the exchanges for 2018. Three months later, Aetna, which had already sharply reduced its exchange participation in 2017, also confirmed it would pull out completely in 2018.

In 2016, 7 percent of U.S. counties had just one choice of insurer on their healthcare exchange. In 2017, this year, roughly one-third of U.S. counties have just one choice of insurer. Based upon the information available so far, the New York Times is currently estimating that about 45 percent of U.S. counties will have one or no insurer next year.

One thing is for sure, Mr. President, Americans are facing fewer and fewer health insurance choices, and the prices of those choices are going up.

Proposed rates, proposed rate increases for 2018 are emerging, and once again they are not looking good. Some of the average rate hikes facing Americans around the country include 17.2 percent, 33.8 percent, 30 percent, 45 percent, 38 percent, 58.8 percent.

Three weeks ago, the Department of Health and Human Services released a report comparing the average individual market insurance premium in 2013, which is the year that most of ObamaCare's regulations and mandates were implemented, with the average individual market exchange premium in 2017 in the 39 States that use healthcare.gov. What they found is that between 2013 and 2017, the average individual market monthly premium in the healthcare.gov States increased by 105 percent—105 percent.

In other words, on average, individual market premiums more than doubled in just 5 years. That is from HHS in their report that just came out in the last couple of weeks. Three States saw their premiums triple over the same period—triple in just 5 years.

I don't know too many families who can afford to have their premiums triple over 5 years. What we know is that the ObamaCare status quo is unacceptable, and it is unsustainable.

More than one insurance CEO has suggested that ObamaCare is in a death spiral, and it is pretty hard to disagree. Combine soaring premiums with a steady insurer exodus, and sooner or later we get a partial or complete exchange collapse, which is what we are facing today, not to mention all the other ObamaCare problems, such as the deductibles that are so high that sometimes people can't actually afford to use their healthcare plans or narrow plan networks with few provider choices. We have higher premiums, higher deductibles, higher costs, fewer options, fewer choices.

Republicans are currently working on legislation to help Americans strugg-

ling under ObamaCare. My colleagues in the House made a good start, and in the Senate we are working to build on the bill they passed.

We are committed to helping Americans trapped on the ObamaCare exchanges. We are committed to addressing ObamaCare's skyrocketing premium increases. We are committed to preserving access to care for Americans with preexisting conditions, and we are committed to making Medicaid more sustainable by giving States greater flexibility while ensuring those who rely on this program don't have the rug pulled out from under them. We need to make healthcare more affordable, more personal, more flexible, and less bureaucratic.

My colleague from Oregon was just talking about the complaints they have about the healthcare process, the discussions that are going on, and how much pain, if this passes, it is going to cause the American people. I can tell you one thing: Today, it is pretty darn painful for families I have talked to in my State of South Dakota, hard-working farm and ranch families who are having to pay \$2,000 a month, \$24,000 a year for insurance coverage—in some cases with \$5,000 deductibles, assuming they can even afford to use that expensive policy by being able to cover the deductible. There are people across this country who are hurting because of this failed healthcare insurance program. It is high time for us to fix it.

I believe the American people want to see Congress act in a way that will make healthcare insurance more affordable to them, more personal, so that they will have more choices, greater options, and more competition that will help bring those premiums down to a more reasonable level. They need to have more than one choice. When 45 percent of the counties in America have one choice or no options on the exchanges, that is an unacceptable situation and one that we have to fix.

#### COUNTERING IRAN'S DESTABILIZING ACTIVITIES BILL

Mr. President, I also want to take a few minutes today to discuss the national security bill the Senate just passed, the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act.

I hardly need to recite the long list of Iranian activities that make this country a clear and present danger to peace and stability in the Middle East and outside it. Iran remains the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism. It engages in systematic human rights abuses from torture to the targeting of religious minorities. Of course, Iran has long provided critical support to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who is perhaps most notable for the repeated use of chemical weapons on his own people. The fact that Assad still remains in power after the long list of atrocities his regime has committed is due in no small part to the support that Iran has provided.