

have had numerous productive discussions on the way forward. We believe we can and must do better than ObamaCare's status quo.

Working together and listening to our constituents, we are focused on the following: stabilizing insurance markets which are collapsing under ObamaCare; freeing Americans from ObamaCare's mandates, which force them to buy insurance they don't want; improving the affordability of health insurance, which is spiking under ObamaCare; strengthening Medicaid for those who need it most; and preserving access to care for patients with preexisting conditions.

Senate Republicans will continue working because it is clear that we cannot allow Americans' healthcare to continue on its current downward trajectory, taking so many families right along with it.

The ObamaCare status quo is simply unsustainable. The American people deserve relief, and we will keep working to provide it.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote on confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 108 occur at 11 a.m. tomorrow morning, with the pending cloture motions ripening after disposition of the Long nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask to speak under leaders' time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

CONDITION OF REPRESENTATIVE SCALISE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, before I begin, I want to express how

glad we all are to hear that Representative SCALISE is doing better. Over the weekend, his condition changed from critical to serious. It seems he has a ways to go, but we are all very happy to hear that the signs are more positive and moving in the right direction.

USS "FITZGERALD" TRAGEDY

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I would also like to express my heartfelt condolences to the families of the seven U.S. Navy sailors who were lost in the crash of the USS *Fitzgerald*. The loss of these seven men in peacetime, in such a bizarre and rare accident, is nothing short of a tragedy. I expect the Navy will conduct a thorough and full investigation to figure out what went wrong and hold all responsible parties accountable. For now, our prayers are with the families of the seven sailors who lost their lives in service to this great country.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on healthcare, we are only 2 weeks away from the July 4th recess, and my friends on the other side say we are going to vote on a healthcare bill before the break. Democrats still have not seen the bill. The Republican Health and Human Services Secretary has not seen the bill. The American people have not seen the bill. I am sure many Republican Senators have not seen the bill either. The White House spokesman could not even say if the President has seen the bill.

This is a bill that would likely reorder one-sixth of the American economy and have life-and-death consequences for millions of Americans. It is being discussed in secret, with no committee hearings, no debate, no amendments, no input from the minority. This is the most glaring departure from normal legislative procedure that I have ever seen. My friend the majority leader used to sing the praises of regular order and wax poetic about the wisdom of the committee process and an open amendment process.

Republicans criticized Democrats vehemently for passing the Affordable Care Act with only Democratic votes, and that is after we accepted dozens of Republican amendments during a robust hearing process. Now that the shoe is on the other foot and Republicans are in charge, all of those concerns and criticisms have disappeared. No committee process, no hearings, nothing—quite the opposite of what they called for 5 years ago. What gall.

Why are my Republican friends engaging in this farce of a legislative process? Why are Republicans willing to engage in such blatant hypocrisy, contradicting all of the things they have said about good procedure in the Senate? What are they afraid of? There is only one reason Republicans are doing this: They are ashamed of their bill. The Republicans are writing their

healthcare bill under the cover of darkness because they are ashamed of it, plain and simple. They are ashamed that the bill will likely cause millions to lose their healthcare insurance. They are ashamed because it will increase costs for older and sicker Americans—all to pass along a big, fat tax break to the wealthiest among us, the folks who need it the least. No wonder they do not want to show anyone the bill. They are ashamed of it.

This radical departure from normal procedure on a bill of such consequence leaves the Senate minority little choice but to depart from normal procedure as well. Starting this evening, Democrats will begin objecting to all unanimous consent requests in the Senate, save for honorary resolutions. We will seek, in as many ways as we can, as many times as we can, to refer the House-passed healthcare bill to committee, where it can be vetted, debated, and amended in the open for the American people to see, as is their right.

Tonight, Democrats will hold the floor late into the evening in a series of speeches to highlight just how unprecedented this process is. If Republicans are not going to allow debate on their bill on the floor or in committee, Democrats will make opportunities to debate.

These are merely the first steps we are prepared to take in order to shine a light on the shameful TrumpCare bill and reveal to the public the GOP's backroom deal-making.

Of course there is another way. On Friday, I sent a letter to my friend the majority leader requesting that we hold an all-Senators meeting in the Old Senate Chamber to discuss a bipartisan way forward on healthcare. We should all share common goals—improving the healthcare system by lowering costs, raising the quality of care, and stabilizing the marketplaces. Let's sit down together, all 100 of us, and talk about how we can achieve those results together.

That option, I say to the Republican leader, is on the table, and I hope he will not refuse it, but if Republicans will not relent and debate their healthcare bill in the open for the American people to see, they should not expect business as usual in the Senate.

SPECIAL COUNSEL MUELLER

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, finally, on another matter entirely, I continue to be alarmed by the wave of criticism from the far right of Special Counsel Robert Mueller. It seems obvious that, because Mr. Mueller—one of the most respected and trusted men in Washington—is in charge of investigating Russian interference in our elections and any other issues that arise out of that investigation, the far-right, special interest partisans have set out on a despicable campaign to smear his character and muddy the waters of his investigation.

I just want to remind my colleagues and the American people that there is no one more qualified or more trusted to do this job than Robert Mueller. He spent almost his entire adult life in service to his country. He is a decorated veteran of the Vietnam war and served as U.S. attorney for 12 years. He was appointed by a Republican President, President George Bush, to lead the FBI in 2001 and served his full 10-year term with distinction, and then he was asked to spend an additional 2 years under President Obama. Congress had to pass a special waiver to allow him to continue in his FBI post, and the vote was unanimous. Every Republican—many in this Chamber—voted unanimously to ratify Robert Mueller for another 2 years as FBI Director. What an endorsement—a great endorsement. That vote made Mr. Mueller the longest serving FBI Director since J. Edgar Hoover and the only FBI Director to serve under Presidents of both parties.

Mr. Mueller represents the best of public service. He will pursue this investigation without regard to politics or pressure of any kind, and that is exactly what America needs.

The chorus of extreme commentators and media personalities who seek to curry favor with the President by trying to tear down this man of great integrity is only heaping dishonor on themselves. Worse yet, they are trying to discredit our most important democratic institution—the rule of law. These critics know Mr. Mueller is a straight arrow, and many of them said as much when he was appointed, but because he is in a position to examine the President's actions and perhaps to take action, they are attacking his character.

This is not, my colleagues, a political game. This is a very serious investigation about foreign interference in our elections—something that eats at, that corrodes the roots of our democracy, the very wellspring of our being and pride as a nation.

The man leading this investigation ought to be trusted by the American people, and over the course of his long, distinguished career, he has certainly earned that trust.

Again, I urge that these attacks on Mr. Mueller cease and that my friends on the other side of the aisle join me in defending his reputation. The critics are going much too far.

I yield the floor and ask that the Senator wait 1 minute so that I might have a word with him.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. DONNELLY. Madam President, over the last several months, there has been an important debate about healthcare—a debate between those who believe we can strengthen the American healthcare system by improving the Affordable Care Act and

those who believe the law must be repealed and replaced. If you listen closely, however, the question at the heart of both sides of this debate sound oddly the same—how do we make sure Americans have access to quality healthcare they can afford? It is this shared concern about the affordability of quality healthcare and the recent actions of the Trump administration that I would like to discuss today.

For a moment, let's set aside the healthcare reform debate because whether we agree to work together in a bipartisan way to improve our healthcare system, as I strongly believe we should, or whether Republicans push through a partisan proposal to significantly change the way in which Americans receive healthcare, we should all be able to agree that we want to protect the stability of the insurance markets and access to quality, affordable healthcare. Yet, despite this shared objective, protecting the stability of our healthcare system has not been the approach of this administration. Instead, it has done the opposite. It has tried to drive change by creating instability and chaos.

On his first day in office, the President did not ask how he could fix the Affordable Care Act or improve the healthcare system. Instead, he began a deliberate, strategic effort to undermine the healthcare system, to drive up costs, and to create a scenario so painful for regular folks that we would have no choice but to rebuild the healthcare system from scratch.

On the day he was sworn in, President Trump signed an Executive order to exempt, to delay, and to defer the implementation and enforcement of the law, creating instability in the marketplaces where millions of Americans obtained the coverage they needed. The administration canceled enrollment efforts to attract younger and healthier Americans into the insurance markets. This resulted in an estimated 500,000 fewer Americans purchasing coverage. Most notably, the administration has refused to commit to continuing critical payments that lower deductibles and copays for our families. This drives up the costs for our friends and neighbors, and in some States, it drives insurance companies out of the market completely.

To be fair, though, the President has been straightforward about his strategy to undermine the Affordable Care Act, noting that the best thing we can do “is to let ObamaCare explode. Let it be a disaster because we can blame that on the Democrats.”

For the President and many in Washington, healthcare seems to be a political exercise. I can assure you that for the citizens of my State back home in Terre Haute, in Richmond, in Fort Wayne, in Indianapolis, in Lawrenceburg, and in Evansville—particularly for those with preexisting conditions, including children, older Hoosiers, and people with disabilities—this is about a lot more. It is about the health and the

well-being of our loved ones. It is about the financial security of our families. For many, it is a life-and-death issue.

This week, Indiana's insurance companies will submit their proposed healthcare rates for 2018 to the Indiana Department of Insurance. It is the first step in a routine process that determines how much Hoosiers will be paid for critical healthcare coverage in the coming year. The 2018 filings, however, are likely to be anything but routine. Growing evidence across the country shows that the actions taken by the President and the administration, along with legislative uncertainty in Congress, have created instability and have created chaos in the insurance markets, resulting in significant cost increases for consumers.

Let me share just a few examples of what I am hearing from the insurance companies in my home State of Indiana. The president and CEO of CareSource, an insurer that offers plans to Hoosiers through the insurance marketplace, told me that at the beginning of this year, the company was seeing rates stabilize, and if there was certainty regarding cost-sharing payments—those payments I previously discussed—rates would increase by about 2 percent—2 percent—in 2018 compared to 2017.

Now, though, the company is saying that, if the administration stops cost-sharing payments—and they have refused to commit to making those payments—rates for silver plans would increase by a minimum of 15 percent.

This is real money, real families, real healthcare, and real life-and-death decisions.

The president and CEO said: “In addition, we believe that ceasing CSR payments may adversely impact the risk pools, potentially leading to further increases in future years.”

The chairman and CEO of Indianapolis-based Anthem said, in part, in a letter:

As I have stated publicly over the previous few months, without certainty of CSR funding . . . Anthem will have no choice but to reevaluate our approach to filing 2018 rates.

Such adjustments could include reducing service area participation, requesting additional rate increases, eliminating certain product offerings, and/or exiting certain individual ACA-compliant markets altogether.

Let me be clear. These cost increases, limits on product offerings, and market exits are not the result of the current law or even the healthcare system. This is a deliberate choice. They are the result of a deliberate choice by the President to undermine the healthcare law at the expense of real people—moms, dads, sisters, brothers, sons, and daughters.

This makes no sense. If your house needs repairs, you don't set the house on fire. You work to fix the issues.

If we are serious about improving healthcare in this country, we can do it, and we can do it by working together. In my home State of Indiana, I was proud to work with then-Indiana Governor and now Vice President MIKE