

in a sudden about-face, he described the House-passed bill as “mean.” “Mean” is what President Trump said of the House GOP healthcare plan.

Some back home may find it a surprise that I could be in agreement with President Trump, but do you know what? President Trump is right. I am saying it right here on the floor: President Trump is right. The House-passed bill that he praised is mean. It is mean because it would do so much harm to so many Americans.

It is untenable. It is unrealistic. And if Senate Republicans think they can fix it behind closed doors, they are wrong. We should be working together, Republicans and Democrats—together—to improve the Affordable Care Act. If there are parts where it is flawed, let’s fix it. If there are parts where it could be improved, let’s join together and strengthen it. Let’s not double down on Americans at a time when their President is turning his back on the very programs that support our social safety net. Women and children and low-income Americans and small businesses alike are all going to suffer under his plans.

We 100, as representatives of our constituents—I think we have a responsibility to give voice to their concerns. We 100 Senators are elected to represent 350 million Americans. We are supposed to be the conscience of the Nation. Maybe it is time that each one of us, Republicans and Democrats alike, started listening to what Americans say about healthcare.

A family physician from Manchester, VT, wrote to me saying: “I do not support efforts to roll back or eliminate the patient-centered insurance reforms established in recent years that prohibit discrimination against patients due to their race, gender, health status, or geographic location. These reforms matter to the everyday lives of our patients.”

Someone from Brattleboro, VT, wrote: “I am writing to ask what I can do to help stop Medicaid from being changed to the system being promoted by the Republican majority.”

From Jericho, VT: “I had Hodgkin’s lymphoma 3 years ago and was fortunate to have insurance to cover most of the roughly \$100,000 bill. Having had cancer is stressful enough without constantly worrying about severe financial consequences if it strikes again.”

From Bennington, VT: “Being patient-centered means we put the patient first. As a physician and advocate for my patients, I do not want any of them to be hurt by the actions Congress takes or fails to take.”

And then from Manchester Center, VT: “I will be one of the [20 million] people to lose their health insurance when the Trump administration almost certainly repeals the ACA in a few months. Tax credits will not help me to regain it.”

And from the small town of Sandgate, VT: “My son has a chronic illness that, without our insurance,

would cost \$1,000 per month in prescriptions alone. That doesn’t even cover the regular checkups. Right now he is covered, but, as I’m sure you remember from when you first got out of college or high school, we know that he may not have as good coverage when he gets out on his own. The Republican plan is a death sentence for him.”

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These are real people. These are real stories about their lives, and I am willing to guess that there are similar people in virtually every State in this country with more stories like these.

This isn’t a political campaign. This is about life and death and access to healthcare. For these Vermonters and for millions of Americans across the country, the decisions we make here will have consequences—real consequences in their lives. Every Senator should think about that before we hastily undo years of progress to increase affordable access to healthcare for millions of Americans.

The Republican majority, led on, cheered on by President Trump, passed a bill which would take so many millions of people off of healthcare. It would devastate Medicaid. It would make it so much more difficult for people to get healthcare. Then the bill they fought so hard to pass, the bill they cheered on, the bill they celebrated in the Rose Garden with President Trump, finally, somebody read what they passed. What a novel idea. They had all voted on it. They had all gone home. The President had praised them. I remember the pictures of them beaming in the praise of the President. Well, somebody finally read the bill and told the President, and he said that bill is “mean.” The House GOP healthcare plan—that bill is “mean.”

Well, I agree with President Trump, but you know what they are pushing now—he and his administration—the Senate bill; yet nobody has seen the Senate bill. Nobody knows how many people are being cut off the roll. Nobody knows how many people are going to be without healthcare. Nobody knows how large the cuts will be to Medicaid. Nobody knows how much our 50 States are going to be hurt by it. Nobody knows which millions of Americans—good, hard-working, honest Americans—are going to lose healthcare in the wealthiest, most powerful Nation on Earth.

Will that be celebrated? Then, after it is passed, will somebody at the White House whisper to the President: The Senate bill is pretty mean, too. The Senate bill is pretty mean, but by golly, we got it passed. We had it on our bumper stickers that we would, and we got it passed. We are wealthy. We will have our healthcare. Too bad for those tens of millions of Americans who won’t.

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.

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

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

REQUESTS FOR AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I have nine requests for committees to meet during today’s session of the Senate. They do not have the approval of the Democratic leader; therefore, they will not be permitted to meet.

I ask unanimous consent that a list of committees requesting authority to meet be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Committee on Armed Services
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Committee on Foreign Relations
Committee on the Judiciary
Committee on Intelligence
Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet
Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining
Subcommittee on Multilateral International Development, Multilateral Institutions, and International Economic, Energy, and Environmental Policy
Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRANS-ALASKA PIPELINE SYSTEM

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I have come to the floor this afternoon to mark the 40th anniversary of the first oil moving through the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. In Alaska, we call it TAPS. This is an 800-mile-long engineering marvel that runs from the North Slope of Alaska to tidewater in Valdez.

Forty years is a good, long history. I recognize that, and so this afternoon, in the interest of time, I will abbreviate the history, but I want to start the story of our pipeline in the late 1960s. Believe it or not, this was a pretty bleak moment for oil exploration in Alaska. Despite great promise, many companies had given up on exploration on the North Slope. By some accounts, at that point in time, there were at least 14 dry holes that had been drilled before ARCO and Humble Oil Company decided they were going to sink just one last well. It was actually an ARCO executive who described it “more as a decision not to cancel a well already scheduled to go ahead.”

That well, Prudhoe Bay State No. 1, would prove to be a game changer for Alaska. We had discovered oil. We discovered oil on the North Slope and a lot of it. We quickly learned that Prudhoe Bay would be one of the largest oilfields in global history, by far the largest ever discovered in the United States. Early estimates, at that time, suggested as much as 9 billion barrels of oil could be recovered from it. We have learned over these intervening 40 years that we so far underestimated that.

Yet it was not just the issue of discovering the oil. Prudhoe Bay is located in a very remote part of the State, as far north as you can go—a pretty inhospitable area given the climate—far away from population centers in the lower 48. So a lot of challenges needed to be overcome before production could begin.

Initially, it was like, OK, how do we move significant quantities of oil? How do we transport this oil to market? It was Dan Yergin, in his book “The Prize,” who did a great job of describing the various choices that were out there.

He wrote: “Icebreaker tankers that would travel through the frozen Arctic seas to the Atlantic were seriously considered. Other suggestions included a monorail or fleet of trucks in permanent circulation on an eight-lane highway across Alaska.”

They then “calculated that it would require most of the trucks in America” to do this. There was also “a prominent nuclear physicist recommended a fleet of nuclear-powered submarine tankers that would travel under the polar ice cap to a deepwater port in Greenland—the port to be created, in turn, by a nuclear explosion. Boeing and Lockheed explored the idea of jumbo jet oil tankers.”

Obviously, none of those ideas came about, and some probably for very good reason, but after significant study and debate, a pipeline emerged as the best way to transport Alaska’s oil. While two routes were considered—one over land, which would run across Canada—an all-Alaska route was ultimately chosen as the best way to go.

Yet, even then, pipeline construction could not begin right away. There were serious debates in the State over issues like taxes and tariffs and pipeline ownership, and it really consumed our State’s legislature for years. The land claims of the Alaska Natives needed to be settled. This occurred in the landmark legislation that passed in 1971.

Then it was in 1973 that Congress took up the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Authorization Act. As part of that debate here on the Senate floor, Alaska’s Senators offered an amendment to deem the environmental impact statement for the pipeline to be sufficient and to shield it from what could have been decades of litigation by its opponents. This was a critically important aspect to the debate and really to the future of the pipeline in order to ensure that this construction would not be delayed by litigation.

The vote was as close as votes get here in the Senate. It was deadlocked 49 to 49, and sitting in that chair, the Vice President at the time, Spiro Agnew, cast the deciding vote in Alaska’s favor. So every time I see the bust out here of Vice President Agnew, I look at him. Other people reflect on Vice President Agnew in different ways. I reflect on that deciding vote that allowed us to proceed with our Trans-Alaska Pipeline.

The pipeline bill went on to pass the Senate on a strong bipartisan basis. Not long after that, then-President Richard Nixon signed it into law. This was tremendous news for Alaska because we would be allowed to move forward with the construction.

The construction of this pipeline was a monumental undertaking, but that monumental undertaking was also done with considerable speed. In April of 1974, construction on a 360-mile haul road began. We now call it the Dalton Highway. It was finished in 154 days.

For those of you who have heard my plea on the floor and to colleagues who have been in committees when I have talked about the history of my efforts to try to get a 10-mile, one-lane, gravel, noncommercial-use road for the people of King Cove, I think about what we were able to accomplish in 154 days with that haul road that allowed us to then help to facilitate the build-out of the pipeline.

The pipeline itself was the largest privately funded infrastructure project ever undertaken in America at the time. It was significant. It was significant for Alaska, of course, but it was significant for the Nation as well. Its total cost came to be about \$8 billion. In October of 1975, there were about 28,000 people who were working to make this pipeline a reality, and that pipeline was completed in 1977. Again, initial construction of the haul road began in 1974. It was completed in October 1977, which was just 3 years and 2 months after construction began. I am told it was actually 10 days ahead of schedule, according to one estimate, which is pretty remarkable.

The Trans-Alaska Pipeline—and I cannot find a picture that really shows the line well—an extraordinary line, which again, is 800 miles long, running from the North Slope to an ice-free Port of Valdez at tidewater. It crosses three mountain ranges, including Atigun Pass, which has an elevation of more than 4,800 feet. It reaches a grade of 55 degrees at one point in the Chugach Range. So it goes up incredible mountains and down the other side. It crosses more than 600 streams and rivers, and more than 400 miles of it are elevated above the ground.

We have it elevated aboveground here, but in certain areas, you can follow the pipeline either by air, or occasionally, you can see it from the road. It is probably one of the most photographed pipelines in the country, but you will see it go underground in many areas. About half of it is buried underground.

This was part of the engineering that allowed for the recognition that you are building in a permafrost area, so it is how you ensure that you are not having an impact in the ground and the area around it.

It crosses a major fault line, the Denali Fault. Back in November of 2002, we had a 7.9 magnitude earthquake just about 90 miles from Fairbanks on that Denali Fault. The pipe

moved 7½ feet horizontally—moving back and forth this way—and 2½ feet vertically. This pipeline was designed for an 8.5 earthquake. It allows for 20 feet of horizontal movement and 5 feet of vertical movement.

The engineers not only worked to cross some extraordinary terrain but also recognized that this was in an area in which earthquakes did happen. It is extraordinary to listen to the stories of the engineers who inspected every inch of that line after that earthquake in 2002 and to hear their comments about, truly, this engineering marvel.

There are so many stories about the construction of the pipeline just as Alaskans, as we have lived through those pipeline years. It is hard to really capture what it was like to be in Alaska during the time of the construction of that line. We saw our population boom as we saw new workers come into the State. I was living in Fairbanks at the time. I was a high school student and was going into college there. Obviously, that was my town. In my town, all of a sudden there were people from Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma. I can remember seeing guys in cowboy boots in Fairbanks in the winter on the ice and thinking that these guys are going to figure out how to change their footwear. But we worked to welcome these people who were there to really help make a difference.

There were pressures on our community. You could not find a hotel room. You couldn’t find a rental car. It was hard for the grocery stores to keep the shelves stocked in many of the towns. We saw a significant investment in our communities in many different ways. There were a lot of wild stories and tales, some which are appropriate to tell years afterward, some which still keep us smiling, but we do not talk too much about them. There are many good stories out there.

I am proud of this extraordinary infrastructure that we have in Alaska—an extraordinary energy asset—and to be celebrating the fact that, for 40 years now, this pipeline has been not only contributing to Alaska, but contributing to the Nation as something that, as Alaskans, we do look to with pride.

This pipeline is not just a piece of pipe; it is an economic lifeline for the State of Alaska. Over the course of 40 years, TAPS has become the veritable backbone of our State’s economy. It has helped us create jobs to the point at which our oil and gas industry either employs or supports fully one-third of the Alaskan workforce. So it is pretty significant in terms of its impact.

It has generated tremendous revenue for our State, some \$168 billion at last count, which has been used for everything from roads, to schools, to essential services. It really has helped build the State and continues to allow our State to operate.

TAPS has allowed us to create our permanent fund, which we have used to

convert the revenues from a nonrenewable resource—oil—into something that will make an enduring contribution to the growth and the prosperity of future generations.

Our pipeline has also allowed us to keep our tax burdens low, which is critical in a State like Alaska, where the cost of living is extraordinarily high. Alaska has one of the lowest tax burdens of any State, and that is thanks to the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. It also allows us to keep other industries, whether it is fishing or tourism—keep their taxes much lower than they would otherwise be. The scale of this is often hard to imagine.

Dr. Terrence Cole, who is a history professor at the University of Alaska, put it this way back in 2004: “Prudhoe Bay oil was worth more than everything that has been dug out, cut down, caught, or killed in Alaska since the beginning of time. The discovery of the Prudhoe Bay oil field in the late 1960s fulfilled even the most optimistic dreams for statehood.”

From day one, Alaska’s pipeline has also strengthened the energy security of our Nation. Remember, TAPS began operating in the wake of the first Arab oil embargo. It helped tide us over during the 1979 oil crisis. It has insulated us from OPEC and has lessened our dependence on nations who do not share our interests. It has provided reliable and affordable energy that is needed by millions of Americans all up and down the west coast. It really is hard to imagine Alaska without the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. It is hard to imagine the consequences that America would have faced without the 17.5 billion barrels of oil that it has now safely carried to market. Think about that—17.5 billion barrels of oil over the past 40 years. It is no exaggeration to say that, while we built a pipeline, that pipeline helped us build our State.

Today, as we mark the 40th anniversary of TAPS, we can also take stock of the challenges that it faces. Many are a direct result of the decisions made—or perhaps not made—in this very Chamber. While our pipeline once carried 2.1 million barrels of oil per day, accounting for a full quarter of America’s supply, today, that amount has been crimped down to just over 500,000 barrels a day. It is not due to lack of resources—not at all—but instead it is due to our lack of access to those resources. Alaska has never lacked for energy, just the permission to produce it, despite the promises that had been made to us at statehood and beyond.

According to the Federal Energy Information Administration, we have at least 36.9 billion barrels of oil. That is enough to produce 1 million barrels a day for the next 100 years. We have prolific potential in our National Petroleum Reserve, which was specifically set aside for oil production. We have world-class resources in our offshore areas, in the Beaufort, and in the Chukchi Seas in our Arctic Outer Con-

tinental Shelf. We have what is believed to be North America’s largest untapped conventional oil field, which would occupy about one tenth of the nonwilderness 1002 Area within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Again, this is an area that was specifically set aside for development, and the Federal Government recommended that it be opened for that purpose back in 1987—a 30-year anniversary there.

So while we have the resources, what we need are partners at the Federal level who will work with us to restore throughput to the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. I welcome the new administration and its commitment to helping us produce energy—energy for Alaska, energy for the Nation.

I want to end with a quote from the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. This is an opinion piece by VADM Tom Barrett, who is the president of Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. This is the TAPS operator. He has written this opinion piece, and he states as follows: “Though there has been a lot of change on TAPS in 40 years, one unwavering constant remains: the commitment of the people who work on TAPS today to provide safe, reliable, operational excellence, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, resilient amid all of Alaska’s extreme geography and weather.”

I think about the men and women—the engineers, the workers, the contractors, and all those who do such an incredible job to deal with the day-to-day to keep that oil flowing safely. Again, as we recognize 40 years of safely transporting this oil, I want to repeat to my colleagues: TAPS, or the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, is not just a pipeline; it is an economic lifeline for us. It is source of security and prosperity for us as a nation.

So I join my delegation and my colleagues—Senator SULLIVAN and Congressman YOUNG—and all of the Alaskans who are marking this anniversary today, as TAPS reaches 40 good years. We look back, and we appreciate the past, but we also look forward and set our sights on another good 40 years to come.

Mr. President, I thank you, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). The Senator from New Mexico.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I am happy to be joined today on the floor by Senator HEINRICH, who has been a real fighter for healthcare for New Mexicans, and I am looking forward to staying on the floor and hearing him talk about how he feels about this Republican healthcare bill as well.

I rise today for the third time this session to oppose plans by President Trump and the Republicans to gut our healthcare system and to throw millions of Americans off their health insurance.

On May 4 of this year, the day that House Republicans narrowly passed

their TrumpCare bill, the President held a celebration at the White House in the Rose Garden and pronounced the bill a great plan.

Well, TrumpCare may be a great plan if you are wealthy and healthy, because if you are wealthy you get big tax cuts and if you are healthy, your premiums may not go up, and may even go down—that is, until you are sick.

TrumpCare is not a great plan if you are over the age of 62, if you are a hard-working family trying to make ends meet, if you live in a rural area, if you have or have not had an illness like cancer or heart disease or diabetes, or if you are a woman. Twenty-three million Americans will be left high and dry—out of health insurance by 2026. They don’t think TrumpCare is a great plan. To them, it is a mean plan. Actually, those were President Trump’s own words several weeks after the Rose Garden celebration. President Trump came clean with the Senate Republicans, admonishing them that the bill is “mean” and needs to be more “generous, kind, and with heart.” For the first time since his inauguration, I agree with the President on healthcare.

Since day one of the 115th Congress, Republicans have had the Affordable Care Act in their sights, and so has the President. They have tried mightily to do away with the rights and benefits under the ACA. But there is good news. The American people have rallied. They have called, they have emailed, and they have gone to town halls. They have marched, they have made their views known, and they have shared their stories. So far, they have stopped Republicans from gutting our healthcare system.

Just this past Saturday in my home State, simultaneous rallies in opposition to TrumpCare took place in 20 counties. I say to them: Keep up the fight, and I will continue to fight as hard as I can. We need to do all we can to stop this attack on healthcare.

The consequences of upending our healthcare system are enormous. They are enormous for the 20 million Americans who now have healthcare because of the ACA through private insurance and through Medicaid expansion. TrumpCare hurts the most vulnerable—the elderly, the disabled, and those with fewer resources.

The consequences of gutting the ACA and restructuring Medicaid are enormous for our economy, one-sixth of which is related to healthcare. They are enormous for hospitals that rely on third-party reimbursements under the ACA and Medicaid expansion. These hospitals need those revenues, and even more so for rural hospitals that keep their doors open thanks to the ACA, as well as the Indian Healthcare Service facilities, which have reduced wait times and added services because of the ACA.

But the majority in Congress refuses to hold hearings, and they are blocking all public participation. This is unconscionable, and it is undemocratic.