

abuse treatment as one of the basic essential services for health insurance, but they don't.

When they say we are going to write a bill that gives Americans more choice in their health insurance—oh, that sounds appealing—the choice is whether you want mental illness and substance abuse treatment or you don't.

Well, from where I am sitting, that is the kind of insurance coverage that should be basic to everyone. You never know whether that little girl that you are raising—that beautiful little girl—6 years from now is going to be struggling with an addiction. At that point, you better hope that your health insurance policy has some coverage so that you can save her life and bring her back from that addiction.

Now, 280,000 is the next number. That is how many children in Illinois depend on Medicaid for school-based health and medical services, from feeding tubes and handicapped buses to special education teachers. I made a point this last week when I was home to visit the schools in Chicago and Bloomington and hear firsthand what cuts in Medicaid meant to local school districts.

Many Senators don't realize this, but the kids with whom you are dealing who have learning disabilities and other disabilities, many of them are supported at your local schools by Medicaid dollars. The Medicaid dollars pay for the counselors, pay for the special buses, and pay for the feeding tubes for these kids to survive. So when you make a dramatic cut in Medicaid, as the Republican bill that came out of the House does, you endanger the very services and the very benefits that these special ed kids need. The school districts are mandated by law to help these kids, but if the money is cut off from Medicaid, what are they going to do?

The Republican repeal bill that every Republican Congressman in my State voted for slashes \$40 billion in Medicaid funding to Illinois, including money to school districts.

Three—is the most important single number in the next 10 days in the Senate—3. That is the number of Republican Senators needed to stop this. Surely, there are three Republican Senators who are concerned enough about this secret, behind-closed-doors process that we are witnessing when it comes to rewriting healthcare in America—at least three Republican Senators who want to take time to properly review this legislation that affects one-sixth of our economy.

Just the Senators who have publicly stated their personal concerns about this process—if the three of them would come together, we could stop this and do it the right way.

I said privately to a Republican Senator last week, after the tragedy where a Republican Congressman was shot at a baseball practice: Isn't this the moment when we ought to get together quietly—Democrats and Republicans—

when we ought to sit down and write a bill we can both be proud of? I am hoping he was listening.

I am hoping that three Republican Senators, if they stand up for it, will help us achieve that goal. Surely there are three Republican Senators who are worried about the kids in their States like I am worried about the kids in mine, who do not want to make the opioid epidemic any worse, who want to make certain—underline the word “certain”—that they are protecting the people they represent from discrimination because of preexisting conditions. Surely there are at least three Republican Senators who do not want to throw millions of Americans off of health insurance coverage. Maybe some of the Senators who represent States that have been ravaged by the opioid epidemic will step forward. There are a lot of them. It only takes three to change this.

To Republican Senators, I say: Do not do this. Do not do this secret process. Democrats are willing to work with you to improve our healthcare system. I have said before that the only perfect law that I know of was carried down a mountain on clay tablets by Senator Moses. All of the other efforts can use some work, and in this case, we are willing to work with you. Take repeal off the table, and we will put a chair up to the table.

Over the past week, I have received thousands of emails and letters from Illinoisans who are worried about what is happening in the Senate today.

Helen, from River Forest, IL, is 47 years old. She is a primary caregiver for her parents. Her mom has Alzheimer's and is in a nursing home.

Here is what Helen writes:

Just before Thanksgiving, my dad's health deteriorated. He is now in hospice in the same nursing home. I have spent all of their savings—my mom and dad's savings—on healthcare. My mom is finally eligible for Medicaid. Without Medicaid, I would need to bring my parents to my home and quit my job to personally nurse them myself because I don't have the money myself to keep them in the nursing home and pay for private care. Please protect ObamaCare and Medicaid.

Here is Madeline from Chicago, who writes:

My younger sister is disabled. Before the Affordable Care Act went into effect, she was just about to hit the maximum lifetime limit on her private insurance policy.

That used to be the case. You would sign up for insurance, and you would say: Oh, great coverage—no copays, no extra charges. Then you would find in the fine print that there is a limit to the coverage of \$100,000. My friends, I can tell you that we are—each and every one of us—one diagnosis or one accident away from having more than \$100,000 in medical bills. It happens pretty quickly. That used to be built into insurance policies. We outlawed it under the Affordable Care Act. Now, in the name of “choice,” the Republicans want to bring that back.

Madeline writes:

Before the ACA went into effect and my daughter was about to hit the maximum life-

time limit on her private insurance policy, she was going to have to apply to be part of a high-risk pool, but that was going to involve a long wait, without any insurance, plus high premiums if and when she was accepted into the pool. The Affordable Care Act came just in time for my sister and for our family.

When the Republicans in the House say not to worry about people with preexisting conditions, that they have set aside \$8 billion to take care of them in private risk pools, it is sad and, in a way, tragic that they would say that. That is not nearly enough money, and there is no guarantee that private risk pools that never worked before the Affordable Care Act would work in the future. It is a way to give an answer to the obvious question of why they are dropping so many people with preexisting conditions from guaranteed coverage.

The last note is from Erin of Chicago, who writes:

I implore you to force a public hearing on the ACA repeal that the Republicans are trying to sneak through. If this bill passes, many of my friends and family will lose coverage either due to preexisting conditions or because the deductibles are too high. Additionally, my parents are self-employed and getting older. Under the proposed act, their health insurance premiums will likely increase to \$14,000 a year. They cannot afford it. They just can't. They will not have coverage, will get sick, and be unable to afford care.

If the Republicans have a better idea than the Affordable Care Act, for goodness' sake, stop hiding it from the American people. Stop talking about it behind closed doors. If it is such a good idea, bring it out for the world to take a look at. There will be critics. There were certainly critics with regard to the Affordable Care Act. I remember that very well. Yet that is what this body is all about.

The Senate is supposed to be a place where we deliberate on the important issues of our time. Is there anything more important than your health, the health of the people whom you love, and your opportunity to get basic healthcare so that you can protect them?

I implore the Republicans and those who know that this is the wrong way to go to stand up and say so. It only takes three Republican Senators to do this a much different way so as to bring credit to this institution and create a bill—create a change—that makes healthcare more affordable, more accessible, and more fair to more Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

USS “FITZGERALD” TRAGEDY

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, before beginning my remarks about the requirement for a larger Navy, I do want to extend my deepest condolences to the loved ones of those who lost their lives aboard the USS *Fitzgerald* recently.

During Saturday morning's early hours, the USS *Fitzgerald*—a guided-

missile destroyer—collided with a Filipino merchant ship off the coast of Honshu, Japan. The USS *Fitzgerald* sustained significant damage, including the rapid flooding of three compartment areas, and seven sailors lost their lives. These young Americans were on board because they chose to serve their country, and they are heroes whose names will be added to the list of those who will be forever honored by our country.

Questions remain about the collision, and I am hopeful that they will be answered soon. Administrative and safety investigations into this tragedy are already underway, but we cannot change the horrific turn of events that occurred at 2 a.m. off the coast of Japan.

Our hearts go out to the loved ones who are dealing with the grief this accident has caused. We wish a quick recovery for those who were injured, and our gratitude goes to the many sailors who acted swiftly and resolutely to save lives and prevent further damage aboard.

Does the distinguished majority leader wish me to yield for some business?

Mr. MCCONNELL. If the Senator would yield so that I may do wrapup here.

Mr. WICKER. I would be delighted.

Mr. President, I yield to the distinguished majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I thank the Senator.

MORNING BUSINESS

TRIBUTE TO JOAN B. CLAYBROOK

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to take a few moments to acknowledge my friend, Joan Claybrook. Joan is a legend. She is one of the most effective champions this Nation has ever seen—and she is still leading the charge. Last week, Joan celebrated her 80th birthday, and one thing is clear, Joan Claybrook isn't slowing down.

Like so many bright young people in Washington, Joan began her career right here in the U.S. Congress, working for Senator Walter Mondale and Representative James Mackay as a congressional fellow. In the summer of 1966, the Senate unanimously passed the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act, the first major legislation to improve auto safety in this country. This effort was led by consumer advocate, Ralph Nader, and working right by his side was Joan Claybrook. It led to important safety standards we take for granted today: seatbelts, windshield wipers, outside mirrors, and dashboards. This landmark legislation also launched Joan's impressive career as a consumer advocate.

During the Carter administration, Joan served as the head of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, where she led efforts to improve vehicle safety and increased consumer access to safety information. Prior to her time with the National Highway

Traffic Safety Administration, she ran Congress Watch, worked for the Public Interest Research Group, National Traffic Safety Bureau, Social Security Administration, and the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

In 2009, Joan retired as president of Public Citizen, after nearly three decades of service championing consumer interests and campaigning on issues from campaign finance reform, to truck safety, and business regulation. Among her many accolades at Public Citizen, Joan was able to limit the number of triple- and longer double-trailer trucks on the road, and she helped to ensure that health, safety, and environmental agencies were able to continue its important work protecting the American people, but her proudest, and perhaps most impactful, achievement was winning a 20-year battle with the auto industry to install airbags in cars. Because of Joan's work, countless lives have been saved. I want to thank her for these contributions that improved the health and safety for so many across the country.

Joan Claybrook has been honored by numerous organizations, including the Philip Hart Distinguished Consumer Service Award from the Consumer Federation of America, an Excellence in Public Service Award from the Georgetown University Law Center, and an award for Superior Achievement from the National Traffic Safety Bureau—just to name a few. In her precious spare time, Joan serves on the board of Citizens for Tax Justice and Public Justice. She also cochairs the Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety and Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways.

It is not simply Joan Claybrook's extraordinary resume that earned her such great respect; it was her approach to the job. Joan brought humility, integrity, and fairness to every challenge she faced. Her energy, passion, and optimism are infectious, and her continued drive to ensure all Americans have the chance to lead safe and equitable lives make her an inspiration. Joan may have retired, but her commitment to those values has never wavered. She is a force of nature.

I will close with this. I strongly believe in the role of public service to create change and make a difference. Joan Claybrook's years of service reflect these values and prove that, with the right approach, change is possible. I am lucky to count Joan as a friend. It is with great pride that I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating Joan Claybrook's 80th birthday and congratulate her on an outstanding career. I hope Joan enjoys this special day, and I wish her many more wonderful years.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VERMONT LEAGUE OF CITIES AND TOWNS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in Vermont, we believe in forging resil-

ient communities through strong local governments and in fostering well-informed leaders to understand and respond to the many complex issues facing us today. The Vermont League of Cities and Towns, VLCT, embodies these principles and more, and I am delighted to contribute in honoring the league and its members on its 50th anniversary.

Established in 1967, the VLCT was created to help improve local governance. Local officials needed a way to help towns best serve their constituents and to connect members of their communities with their local governments. In response, a handful of municipalities formed the organization that provided these services. Beginning with VLCT's first executive director and continuing through today, this organization has consistently worked to represent the values of all Vermonters. For the first time in 1995, every city and town in Vermont had joined as members of VLCT, demonstrating how valuable this institution is for all of our communities regardless of their size.

For many years, I too have worked alongside VLCT to improve the lives of Vermonters. Whether through their efforts supporting the State's recovery from Tropical Storm Irene or improving the water quality of Vermont's rivers and streams, their dedication to Vermont's way of life and quality of life makes us all better. They provide direction and advice and support our municipalities in their timely and important but often underfunded responsibilities.

As a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, VLCT will always be there to support us, to support Vermont communities. Our great State is made better by the involvement of organizations like the VLCT, and I wish them continued success over the next 50 years in bettering the lives of all Vermonters.

CBO COST ESTIMATE—S. 512

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, in compliance with paragraph 11(a) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee on Environment and Public Works has obtained from the Congressional Budget Office an estimate of the costs of S. 512, the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act, as reported from the committee on May 25, 2017.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the cost estimate be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 512—NUCLEAR ENERGY INNOVATION AND MODERNIZATION ACT

As reported by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works on May 25, 2017

SUMMARY

S. 512 would direct the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)—which licenses and regulates the use of radioactive materials at civilian facilities such as nuclear reactors—to