

better healthcare at a lower cost, there are many ways to do that and save dollars and give better patient care, but that is not what the House proposal is. It was a budget mechanism. I am not just saying that. I am talking to my healthcare providers at home, I am talking to university professors, people who know and understand healthcare and have studied it for a long time. What the House did and now the Senate is doubling down on is nothing but a budget mechanism to cut people off of healthcare—as my colleague said, the most vulnerable of our population.

It is a wrong-headed idea. It is not going to help us control costs. Medicaid reduces bankruptcy rates, helps people stay employed, and boosts our GDP. Why would we want a draconian idea like cutting Medicaid as the centerpiece of a budget proposal by our colleagues on the other side of the aisle? As people have said, because they want to take that revenue and give it away in tax breaks for the wealthy. I guarantee you that is not what we should be doing.

The access to Medicaid is so important. Our veterans access the healthcare system through Medicaid. Many of them receive care through the VA, but also they receive services through Medicaid. Veterans would be impacted and would lose care. Our children who are seen at hospitals, such as the Children's Hospital in Seattle, are Medicaid populations, and they would not have the resources to get access to care. Our institutions that are covering individuals at Medicaid rates would take a hit.

All the Senate proposal does is basically move that cap, but it is a steeper cap at a point in time that makes and exacerbates this problem of cutting people off of access to care. So if the House bill is mean, this is just doubling down on mean.

There is nothing about deconstructing this safety net that is so important to Americans that goes hand-in-hand with the philosophy about how to drive down costs to healthcare. If you think about it, if we came out here and had a discussion with 100 U.S. Senators and said a great way to drive down the cost of healthcare would be to cut people off of healthcare, most people would say that is not a smart idea because when people are cut off of healthcare, we know that uncompensated care exacerbates healthcare needs, challenges other parts of our system, and delivering care to them makes it more expensive. When we have had discussions and roundtables about the proposal that the House had put out, providers in my State told me point-blank, covering the Medicaid population has helped drive down and control the rate of insurance in the private markets. By saying we are going to cut Medicaid at a more drastic rate, we are going to just send a signal to the market that rates for the private insurers should go up.

I don't think that is what my constituents want. They want us to inno-

vate. They want us to drive quality care and managed care into parts of the United States where it doesn't exist. They want us to take care of our most vulnerable population, and they want to make sure we are not delivering that off people who are going into the emergency room 50 times in a year because they don't have insurance.

We know the Medicaid rate is critically important. Medicaid costs up to one-quarter less than private insurance. It is a way to deliver care. We know measures we put into the Affordable Care Act, such as moving people off of nursing home care to community-based care, has saved Medicaid dollars. More States should do it.

We know plans such as bundling up the individual market into larger programs so they can have clout like others who work for a larger employer has also driven down costs. So those are the things we should be accelerating, not this notion that we move forward as a country by cutting the most vulnerable off of healthcare.

I ask my colleagues to come out and discuss this concept, discuss this idea, how it will affect the healthcare providers in their States. I plan to do that with my State. I hope they will come out here and tell us why it is a smart strategy to cut people off from Medicaid. I know no State that has the money to make up for the Federal share of Medicaid that is going to be doubled down in this bill.

I do not want to see a war on Medicaid. What I want to see is innovation. What I want to see is that covering people with some level of insurance basically helps save everybody on their insurance bills as well. I hope my colleagues will take this discussion draft and be proud to come out here and discuss it, but we have heard very little of that thus far.

Let's look at the real numbers, and I guarantee that we will hear from Governors, we will hear from States, we will hear from providers, we will hear from businesses, and we will hear from people who do not think this is a good idea.

Already there are comments from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging: "This strategy will also put . . . Medicaid [and] states [and consumers] on a fiscally precarious path."

We have heard from other people that the Medicaid cap is up to twice as bad for States, will cause problems, and also from children's healthcare groups: "Converting Medicaid into a per capita cap . . . would dismantle critical protections . . . to care for all enrollees."

These aren't just partisan comments. These are the facts. What my colleagues don't realize is that by taking a huge chunk out of Medicaid, you are taking a huge chunk out of the safety net so many Americans depend on. It will not help us lower costs. It will exacerbate an escalation of rates for everyone in the market.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, all postclosure time on the Billingslea nomination expire at 2 p.m. today and that if cloture is invoked on the Svinicki nomination, the postclosure time not expire until 5:30 p.m. on Monday, June 26.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Iowa.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in March, Mr. Comey briefed Ranking Member FEINSTEIN and this Senator on the Russia investigation. This included telling us who was and who was not under investigation.

After that meeting, I publicly called for Mr. Comey to tell the public what he had told us about whether President Trump was under investigation. I did this because the public had a right to know. Mr. Comey told me and other congressional leaders that the President was not under investigation. He even told the President himself, and I understand that he repeatedly told this to the President. But Mr. Comey didn't listen to my request for transparency. I think transparency in government is very important because transparency brings accountability, and government needs to be accountable. Mr. Comey didn't listen to the President's request. Only months later has the truth finally come out.

Well, it ought to raise the question with anybody: What happened in the meantime? What happened because Mr. Comey refused to tell the American people that the President wasn't under investigation? The short answer is something you see almost hourly, particularly in this city: media hysteria. Countless media articles falsely claimed the President was under investigation for colluding with Russia. Unfortunately, a number of our Democrat colleagues in the House and Senate played right along. Over and over again, the media published selective leaks. They published classified half-truths. All this was used to make false allegations of sinister conduct by the President. And, of course, there were a lot of people who believed it.

The intelligence community conducted an assessment of Russia's efforts to interfere in the election. That assessment said one of Russia's goals was to undermine public confidence in our democratic system.

Because Mr. Comey refused to tell the public that the FBI was not investigating the President, conspiracy theories and, of course, wild speculation have run rampant about the election, the President, and Russia. These conspiracy theories and wild speculation have played right into Russia's aim of undermining faith in our democratic system.

That doesn't come out very often in these stories, but we have to understand that Russia makes a career of not only undermining democratic systems in the United States, look at what they have done in Ukraine militarily, and look at what they have done in France with the elections and in the Netherlands with the elections. They are talking about upcoming elections in Germany, where the Russians will try to do the same thing because autocrats don't like democratic systems that work and whatever they can do to undermine those democratic systems is going to obviously make them look better in comparison.

Those national security concerns should have taken precedence. Mr. Comey said he was worried about a duty to correct the record if evidence of collusion involving the President came to light later on. But that concern was merely hypothetical—in other words, pure speculation. In the unlikely event that it came to pass, the public should know if the FBI is pursuing a criminal investigation against the President, just as the public should know if the FBI is pursuing a criminal investigation against a major party's nominee for President. But Mr. Comey agreed with Attorney General Lynch to shade the truth in favor of the Clinton campaign's rhetoric and call what was an investigation a "matter" instead of using the word "investigation." This came about because of an order by Attorney General Lynch.

After a year of the entire might of the U.S. intelligence community and the FBI looking for evidence of collusion with the Russians, where is that evidence? But after all of this chaos and mountains of innuendo about the President and collusion with Russia, the truth finally came out: The FBI was not investigating President Trump in the Russia probe. The media was wrong. The Democrats were wrong. The wild speculation and conspiracy theories ended up harming our country. They played right into Russia's hands.

How did we all learn the truth? In President Trump's letter removing Mr. Comey from office. At first, most didn't believe it. The media scoffed when they read what the President said in that letter. They insisted that Mr. Comey would never tell the President that he was not under investigation. We learned earlier this month from Mr. Comey himself that he had done exactly that. It wasn't a surprise to me because Mr. Comey had told me the same thing.

I have to note something else here. Mr. Comey didn't just tell the President, Senator FEINSTEIN, and me that the President was not under investigation. He had also told the Gang of 8. Of course, the Gang of 8 includes the Senate minority leader, Mr. SCHUMER. But even after Mr. Comey told the Gang of 8 that the President was not under investigation, the minority leader told the media that the President was under investigation, and, of course, that fur-

ther helped feed media hysteria. The minority leader even tried to say that the Senate shouldn't vote on the Supreme Court nomination because the President was under investigation, and the whole time, he knew it wasn't true.

Media hysteria and baseless political attacks filled the vacuum left by Mr. Comey's failure to inform the public—to be transparent, to be accountable.

The odd thing about it is none of this fiasco had to happen. If Mr. Comey had just been transparent with the public, as I urged him to be, it could have been avoided.

Unfortunately, now it looks as if Mr. Comey and the media might be doing the same thing to Attorney General Sessions.

Two weeks ago, Mr. Comey said he didn't tell the Attorney General about the conversation he supposedly had with the President about General Flynn. Mr. Comey said this was because he believed the Attorney General was going to recuse himself from the Russia investigation.

Mr. Comey said the FBI was aware of the facts that he couldn't discuss in an open setting that could have made the Attorney General's continued engagement problematic. Well, that vague statement sounds very mysterious to people who don't know the whole truth. They will wonder: What were those secret facts? What did the FBI conclude about those secret facts? Was the Attorney General under investigation? Did the Attorney General collude with Russia?

Once again, Mr. Comey is not being as transparent about senior government officials and the Russia investigation as he could or should be. Now the speculation is running rampant again, this time about the Attorney General instead of the President.

CNN reported that Mr. Comey told the Intelligence Committee behind closed doors that the issue was a possible additional meeting between Sessions and the Russian Ambassador. The media has begun to speculate all sorts of nefarious things. So here we go again. The rumor mill is back in business. It is insinuating improper ties with Russians and undermining people's faith in another senior government official, with the follow-up that it also undermines people's confidence in our institutions of government, and maybe even in our Constitution.

This is the same destructive pattern, and it plays right into the Russians' hands again. Well, this time around, we shouldn't put up with it. We ought to say enough is enough. There is no reason Mr. Comey couldn't have told the public the whole truth.

Once again, 3 months ago, Mr. Comey specifically told Members who was and who was not under investigation in the Russia probe. He should also tell the public whether the FBI ever had an open investigation on Attorney General Sessions. He should tell the public whether the FBI checked out the times Sessions met the Russian Ambassador.

He should tell the public whether the FBI looked into the Mayflower Hotel event that went on. He should tell the public if the FBI found nothing improper about these meetings. If there was nothing to it, he should say so publicly. He should not be telling Senators one thing behind closed doors and then making public insinuations that are different. He is the person who can nip this ridiculous speculation in the bud.

Mr. Comey should have told the public earlier what he told Members about the President, and now he should tell the public what he told Members about the Attorney General. Enough of this nonsense.

The investigations of Russian interference and of circumstances surrounding Mr. Comey's firing will continue. I am confident that we will eventually get all the facts, one way or another, and we are going to go where the facts take us. In the meantime, it is time to stop the rumor-mongering. It is time to stop the innuendoes and half-truths. It is time to stop leaking national security information to score political points. And it is time to stop playing into Russia's hands by intentionally sowing false doubt about your political opponents. Instead, it is quite obvious that it is time to get back to doing the people's business.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a relevant supplemental article from the Washington Post.

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

[From the Washington Post, June 14, 2017]
THE SESSIONS HEARING SHOWS WHO'S REALLY COLLUDING WITH RUSSIA
(By Marc A. Thiessen)

According to the U.S. intelligence community, Russia's objectives in meddling in the 2016 election included not only hurting Hillary Clinton's chances but also undermining "public faith in the U.S. democratic process," "impugning the fairness of the election" and calling into question "the U.S.-led liberal democratic order." If the spectacle of the past few months is any indication, Russian leader Vladimir Putin is certainly succeeding in these latter goals.

And here is the great irony: Those who are falsely claiming that Trump was under FBI investigation for collusion with Moscow are, in fact, the ones inadvertently colluding with Putin to undermine American democracy.

Case in point is the campaign of McCarthyite character assassination on display in the Senate Intelligence Committee hearing Tuesday. No doubt Putin was smiling as Attorney General Jeff Sessions was forced to rebut what he correctly called "appalling and detestable" accusations that he colluded with the Russians and lied to the Senate. Sessions testified that the much-vaunted "third meeting" between Sessions and the Russian ambassador at the Mayflower Hotel—which Sessions reportedly failed to disclose—did not happen, at least not beyond possible incidental contact that he doesn't even recall.

There was a time when airing unproven allegations of coordinating with the Kremlin was seen as bad form. Now it is common practice in Washington. These kinds of false charges and innuendo directly assist Russia

in its efforts to undermine public confidence in our democratic institutions. Those raising such accusations without proof are, wittingly or unwittingly, doing the Kremlin's bidding.

For months, Democrats (a.k.a. "The Resistance") have been spinning the false narrative that President Trump was under FBI investigation to call into question the validity of his presidency. In March, Democrats used it as a pretext to argue that Trump did not have the legitimacy to fill a Supreme Court vacancy. Senate Democratic leader Charles E. Schumer (N.Y.) declared in a floor speech that the Senate should not vote on Neil Gorsuch's nomination because Republicans "stopped a president who wasn't under investigation" from filling the seat. Two days later, Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) said the same thing, declaring, "The FBI has revealed that the sitting president of the United States is under investigation. And it raises a really, I think, important question and that is whether or not a president who is under investigation by the FBI ought to be ramming through a Supreme Court nominee that would have a lifetime appointment."

The media gleefully echoed these false claims. The day before Comey testified, CNN blared: "In testimony, Comey will dispute President Trump's blanket claim that he was told he wasn't under investigation." In fact, Comey said precisely the opposite. When Sen. James Risch (R-Idaho) asked, "While you were director, the president of the United States was not under investigation. Is that a fair statement?" Comey replied: "That's correct." Even then, CNN was not willing to concede its error, declaring in a so-called "correction" that "Comey does not directly dispute that Trump was told multiple times he was not under investigation" (emphasis added).

No, Comey did not fail to "directly dispute" it, he directly confirmed it. The CNN story—and its non-correction correction—was "fake news."

Not only that, Comey also testified that Trump never tried to get him to stop the probe into Russia's election meddling, which Comey explained was a separate matter from the FBI's investigation of disgraced former national security adviser Michael Flynn. Not only did Trump not ask Comey to stop the probe, the former FBI director told Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), "He went farther than that. He said, and if some of my satellites did something wrong, it'd be good to find that out." Rubio pressed Comey, asking whether he was testifying that Trump effectively said, "Do the Russia investigation. I hope it all comes out. I have nothing to do with anything Russia. It'd be great if it all came out, people around me were doing things that were wrong." Comey replied, "That was the sentiment he was expressing. Yes, sir."

Given these facts, Trump has legitimate reason to be frustrated. If you knew you were not under investigation by the FBI, but everyone was saying you were, you'd want the truth to get out. And you might be upset with an FBI director who refused to lift the "cloud" hanging over your administration by confirming that he was not investigating you.

That said, Trump has been fueling the liberal feeding frenzy with his tweetstorms taking his critics to task. If Trump knows he did nothing wrong—and if he really wants to find out whether any of his "satellites" did—he should stop talking and tweeting about the investigation, let special counsel Robert S. Mueller III do his work and focus on his job: governing. His daughter Ivanka Trump was recently asked how she dealt with the media frenzy over Russia. She replied, "I'm trying to keep my head down, not listen to

the noise and just work really hard to make a positive impact in the lives of many people."

That's a good strategy—and one her father ought to emulate.

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

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

The Senator from Massachusetts.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, today we finally got a look at the monstrosity of a bill that the Republicans have been hiding behind closed doors for weeks. Yes, it is finally clear how the Republicans were spending their time, locked in those back rooms.

Now we know the truth. Senate Republicans weren't making the House bill better—no, not one bit. Instead, they were sitting around a conference room table, dreaming up even meaner ways to kick dirt in the face of American people and take away their health insurance.

Remember, the Senate Republicans worked for weeks on this new bill. They worked really, really hard on it. It is pretty clear now exactly who they were working for. This bill has one flashing neon sign after another telling us who the Republican Party cares about, and it is not American families.

The Senate bill is crammed full with just as many tax cuts as the House bill—tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires, tax cuts for wealthy investors, and tax cuts for giant companies. All those tax cuts don't come cheap. They start to add up after a while.

Senate Republicans had to make a choice—how to pay for all those juicy tax cuts for their rich buddies. I will tell you how: blood money.

Senate Republicans wrung some extra dollars out of kicking people off the tax credits that help them afford health insurance. They raked in extra cash by letting States drop even more protections and benefits, like maternity care or prescription drug coverage or mental health treatment.

Then they got to the real piggy bank, Medicaid, and here they just went wild. Senate Republicans went after Medicaid with even deeper cuts than the House version—the Medicaid expansion gone, ripped up, and flushed down the toilet. The rest of the Medicaid Program? For Senate Republicans, it wasn't enough that the House bill was going to toss grandparents out of nursing homes or slash funding for people with disabilities or pull the plug on healthcare for babies born too soon. Senate Republicans wanted to go bigger.

The Republican bill claims to protect kids with disabilities by leaving them out of the calculations that decide how

big the Medicaid cuts will be in each State. I don't know if the Republicans were expecting a round of applause for pitting kids with breathing tubes against vulnerable seniors or someone needing treatment for addiction, but I do know this so-called exemption will not do a thing to help these kids. The Republican cuts still slash hundreds of billions of dollars for Medicaid, leaving States with no choice—no choice but to cut services that kids with disabilities desperately need.

Medicaid is the program in this country that provides health insurance to 1 in 5 Americans, to 30 million kids, to nearly 2 out of every 3 people in a nursing home. These cuts are blood money. People will die. Let's be very clear: Senate Republicans are paying for tax cuts for the wealthy with American lives.

Think about what would happen if the Republican bill becomes law next week. Picture a woman in her eighties who lives at home. She is shaky on her feet. She needs help preparing her meals or taking a bath, but her only income is her Social Security check. Right now, Medicaid helps pay for home and community-based services so she can stay in her home, someone who comes by to help for a few hours a week. Because of that help, she gets to stay home, to live independently. The Republicans are determined to cut taxes for millionaires and billionaires, so their healthcare plan cuts Medicaid money that helps millions of seniors stay in their homes.

Without these services, this elderly woman can't live alone. Where does she turn? The usual answer would be a nursing home. Wait. Medicaid pays for most nursing home care in this country. The Republicans are determined to cut taxes for millionaires and billionaires, so they have cut Medicaid funding so much that there is no help for this woman at home and no nursing home bed for her either.

What does she do? She stays home without help. She can't climb the stairs anymore. Her world shrinks. Eventually, most likely, she falls and ends up in the hospital. The care is expensive, and she is miserable.

Finally, let's say the hospital gets her back on her feet, but there is nowhere for her to go when she is discharged. She heads back home to wait for the next fall, maybe the one that will be fatal.

In their determination to cut taxes for the rich, is this what Republicans have planned for frail seniors in our country? Wait until they are all used up and then leave them out at the curb for the next trash pickup?

It isn't just seniors who will be hit hard. How about a premature baby born with lung defects? His parents both have full-time jobs, but no matter how hard they work, no matter how many hours they put in, they will never be able to pay for the millions of dollars in surgeries, equipment, medicine, and therapy that their child