

created, Congress made a smart decision. Lawmakers designed a program so that if health care costs rise, if the economy starts to struggle, Medicaid would be there for the American people, no matter what.

A couple of days ago, the counselor to the President said that, as part of the replacement plan for the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid will be converted to block grants. Let's be clear about what this means.

People like grants, and they like Medicaid. Maybe they are not sure about whether they like block grants. Whether intentional or not, this kind of technocratic, bureaucratic language can trick people. It sounds fine. Maybe it is even the smart thing to do.

Let me be totally explicit about what block granting Medicaid actually means. It means cutting Medicaid. It means less money for Medicaid. It means less health care for people. It is a euphemism. It is not quite a lie, but it is a way of describing something so that you don't know exactly what it is. They are calling it a block grant because they don't want to say that they are cutting Medicaid.

These cuts are going to hurt millions of people. They will hurt working families who rely on Medicaid to pay for nursing home care for their families. We have to be pretty out of touch to not know anyone who at some point in their life will rely on nursing home subsidies from Medicaid. It is happening in my extended family right now.

It is important to remember that Medicaid certainly helps children. Medicaid certainly helps people who are economically disadvantaged. It helps poor people. But it also helps middle-class families, because at the end of a family member's life, who can pay for nursing home care out-of-pocket? You may have saved all of your life, but, for instance, in Hawaii a nursing home costs around \$10,000 a month. So it is a rare family who can pay \$10,000 a month for a grandmother or a great-grandmother or a father or a mother. Nobody can do that. This is going to harm middle-class families.

It is also going to hurt women in particular. Women need Medicaid for maternal health services and for family planning. These cuts are going to hurt seniors and people with disabilities. These people have nowhere else to turn. That is the point of Medicaid. Medicaid is their only option.

Now, I have heard some people say: Well, this is going to expand local control. That is preposterous. The truth is that block granting Medicaid, which is the same thing as cutting Medicaid and giving a fixed amount to the States, gives States less control, not more control. They force States to choose between seniors and kids, between people with disabilities and women, or between health care and education.

Look, it does not matter whom you voted for. American voters—left, right, and center—have this sense that what

we do in Washington is that we run for office saying one thing and then we get in office and we do exactly the opposite. Frankly, the Congress has earned that reputation. This is another instance where a party has promised to not cut Medicaid, but here we are—week 1, day 5—debating cuts on this important program.

This is a deal breaker for me and many of my colleagues, and it will be a disaster for millions of Americans.

I call on everyone on both sides of the aisle to stand up for seniors, to stand up for women, to stand up for children, and to fight any cuts to Medicaid.

I yield the floor.

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RUBIO) The Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, pursuant to the provisions of 20 U.S.C., sections 42 and 43, reappoints the Senator from Arkansas, Mr. BOOZMAN as a member of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution.

The Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, pursuant to the order of the Senate of January 24, 1901, appoints the Senator from Nebraska, Mr. SASSE, to read Washington's Farewell Address on Monday, February 27, 2017.

The Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO EILEEN DUBOWSKI

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, Alaska is a beautiful State—the mountains, the seas, the glaciers, the wildlife. Most in this room and many watching on TV have seen my State on TV shows, on reality shows. Almost everybody talks about at least someday coming to visit. We love tourists, like the Presiding Officer does. So please come. You will have a great experience, guaranteed.

But what makes my State particularly special is the people—kind people, tough people, generous of heart, and, yes, people with a lot of opinions. My State is filled with people who are strong-willed and strong-hearted, creating caring communities in some of the harshest environments in the world.

As part of an initiative that I am doing to highlight some of these great Alaskan citizens, I would like to recognize this afternoon Eileen Dubowski as the Alaskan of the Week. She is someone of a strong mind and a strong heart, and she has helped to make her community and our State a better place.

Eileen lives with her husband in a cabin in Salcha, AK, near the Fairbanks area. This year, this area of my State has experienced some brutally dangerous cold temperatures. Recently, it was 59 degrees below zero near Salcha. That is cold, 59 below zero. Yet, in my State, people work in such weather, they give to their communities, they reach out and watch over their neighbors.

Eileen has been both a special education and regular education teacher for almost 40 years. She is currently at University Park Elementary School. To better communicate with her students, she went to night school to learn American Sign Language. She is active in her church and particularly active in Interior Alaska high school wrestling helping dozens and dozens of students. She has been so involved over the past 40 years in this important activity that she was recently elected into the State of Alaska Wrestlers Hall of Fame. An article in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner quotes her as saying: "Wrestling can take any sized kid and they can be successful."

Congratulations, Eileen, for helping dozens and dozens of kids of all sizes in Alaska and making them successful.

She stated: "When you help each other it makes living up here easier," in the colds of Alaska. The same could be said about anywhere in America.

So thanks, Eileen, for helping make life easier, for your service, and for being this week's Alaskan of the Week.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I wish to talk a little bit this afternoon about the way my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are, unfortunately—and with no reason—delaying and delaying the confirmation of heads of critically important agencies, Cabinet Secretaries, for our country.

Now, we have differences of opinion in this body. That is often a good thing. We debate, we share ideas, we agree, we disagree, we give the voters the very best we have, and then we let them make their own decisions, which they do at the ballot box.

On election day, the American people chose President Trump and Vice President PENCE. The American people did so knowing they would appoint a new Cabinet and be focused on the issues they ran on, but the American people did not vote for delay and they did not vote for obstruction. They voted for action and they voted for a smooth transition, which is what this body has traditionally done.

It has been a longstanding tradition of the U.S. Senate, working hard, to confirm Cabinet nominees of a newly elected President in a timely fashion, particularly when it comes to the President's national security team.

For example, in 2009, upon the election of President Obama, 7 of his Cabinet members were sworn into office on the first day, 5 more were confirmed by the end of the first week—14 Cabinet officials inside of a week.

Where are we right now? Two Cabinet officials and one CIA Director. That is not what the American people expect. That is not the tradition in the Senate. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have a responsibility to the American people to put a government in place and to treat the confirmation process with the same courtesy and seriousness the Senate gave to President

Obama's Cabinet-level nominees, and that is not happening right now. This is serious business, particularly on national security issues.

I am hopeful my colleagues on the other side of the aisle can start getting serious and show this administration the same courtesy that Republicans showed President Obama's administration when he came into office.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL FRIDAY,
JANUARY 27, 2017, AT 10 A.M.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. on Friday, January 27.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:44 p.m., adjourned until Friday, January 27, 2017, at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate January 24, 2017:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

NIKKI R. HALEY, OF SOUTH CAROLINA, TO BE THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, WITH THE RANK AND STATUS OF AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY, AND THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS.

UNITED NATIONS

NIKKI R. HALEY, OF SOUTH CAROLINA, TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE SESSIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS DURING HER TENURE OF SERVICE AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS.