

SS St. Louis in 1939, which brought 900 people from Nazi Germany to the United States to escape the Holocaust. They were turned away. They were forced back into Europe, and hundreds died as a result of it. That was the policy of the day.

When Robert Wagner, the Senator from New York, asked that we allow 10,000 German children to come into the United States to escape the Holocaust, that measure was defeated in committee in the U.S. Senate—children coming to the United States.

After World War II, when we saw 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust and so many others whose lives were compromised and lost, we decided to change the U.S. approach when it came to refugees. Instead of pushing back against them, we began to embrace them. And do you know what has happened since? We developed a reputation around the world as the safe place to be, the country that cared. Ask over 600,000 Cubans who came to the U.S. shores to escape Castro's regime. Remember, at that time, Castro had allied with the Soviet Union, our mortal enemy of the Cold War. Yet, without vetting—without extreme vetting—we said to these Cubans: You are welcome to be safe in the United States, and they came in the thousands. Are they an important part of America? You bet they are, and there are three Cuban-American U.S. Senators to prove it.

Today, a question has been raised by the Trump regime as to what our view is going to be toward refugees in the future. Thank goodness we didn't raise it with Cuba, nor did we raise it when Jews in the Soviet Union were facing persecution. They asked for a chance to come to the United States. Synagogues and communities across the United States opened their arms and gave them a chance, and over 100,000 came to our shores. We are better for it. We really have demonstrated that our ideals and values as a nation apply to those who came to our shores.

The list goes on and on, from Yugoslavia to Viet Nam, to Somalia, and many other places where the United States has shown that we are a caring nation. Now comes this new President who says: It is America first; we are going to redefine this refugee policy.

Well, this redefinition of America around the world is something that many of us believe is just plain wrong. These Executive orders were issued by President Trump without consultation with even his own Cabinet members who have been appointed. Those in the area of national security, for example, weren't consulted before these Executive orders went into effect. When I talked to the Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection, it turns out they were given instructions at the last minute as to how to treat passengers coming into international terminals over the weekend.

I know what happened at O'Hare. Over 130 people were stopped and de-

tained and questioned, and some were never allowed to board planes in other countries, and some were returned to those countries. It was chaotic. It didn't show basic competency in running a government, and it was fundamentally unfair.

Let me say it wasn't just a matter of an uncomfortable situation. It wasn't just a situation of people being inconvenienced. One of our priorities when it comes to refugees, even from those seven countries that President Trump noted, were those who were in desperate medical conditions. So when the President said: I just wanted a pause—a pause for these seven countries—let me ask what we think that pause means to that 9-year-old Somali child in an Ethiopian refugee camp with a congenital heart disease that can't be treated anymore in that camp and who was finally going to get to come for medical care in the United States. That pause by President Trump could be deadly. A 1-year-old Sudanese boy with cancer. A Somali boy with a severe intestinal disorder living in a camp that doesn't even have medical facilities. A pause. We will get it together. We will get back to you later. That is the kind of human condition that is being affected by these orders issued by our new President. Is it any wonder that so many people around the world have reacted?

First, they should react when it comes to our security. Do we know how many terrorist refugees have come from these seven countries on the list? None. Not one. Not one Syrian refugee has engaged in terrorist activities in the United States. If you watched "60 Minutes" over the weekend, you will understand why.

This is not an easy ask. You don't just hold up your hand and say: I am ready to go to the United States. You first submit your name to the U.N. Commission on Refugees. Then we cull the list to find the ones we might consider in the United States, and that is about 1 percent. Then we put them through a vetting process that can go on for 2 years—2 years of being interrogated, investigated, examined, watched, and challenged. Then, finally, after those years, they may have a chance to come to the United States.

So now we are going to move to extreme vetting? What is that going to be—trial by fire? What is left? We are doing the very best. The fact that there has not been one refugee from any of these countries engaged in terrorism is an indication that we have a good process that is stronger than any nation on Earth. Yet the President has said we are going to stop these refugees from coming indefinitely from Syria and for months from these other six countries.

Then he made a statement on a Christian broadcasting show that he was on that really went far over the line. During the course of the campaign, he said repeatedly: This will be a Muslim ban. Then he said: They told me to stop saying "Muslim ban," so he stopped for a while.

It turns out that Rudy Giuliani, the former mayor of New York, said: Well, he called me in and said, How do I put together something legal that is a Muslim ban? I think Mayor Giuliani may have been speaking out of school, but it is an indication of what was really going on in the Trump campaign and this administration.

On this Christian broadcasting show, the President was explicit that he would give priority to Christians because he believes they would be persecuted in those countries. That flies in the face of some fundamentals in this country—the fundamentals of our Constitution—because we have said that when it comes to religion, this government shall not favor any religion. Here we have the President of the United States on a television show saying the opposite.

It is being challenged in court, at least to some extent. It has been slowed down by restraining orders issued by Federal courts and judges around this country.

Last night, the Acting Attorney General, Sally Yates, said that in good conscience, she could not defend President Trump's decisions in these Executive orders. For that act of courage, she was fired. I am sure she expected it. But I want to say that for a woman who has given her life—20 years of it, at least—as a prosecutor and who had an exemplary career at the Department of Justice, my hat goes off to her. I think she did what she thought was right and faced the consequences. History will prove her right and this decision by the administration wrong.

So now we have Rex Tillerson, who wants to be Secretary of State of the United States of America. How would you like to take over that job tomorrow in light of what I have just mentioned—the Executive orders issued by the President without consultation with the Department of State; judging NATO to be obsolete in his Twitter; and then having a relationship with Mexico where the President is canceling trips to the United States, not to mention other things said about China and other countries. It is an awesome challenge. It is a challenge that we have to ask whether Mr. Tillerson is prepared for. He has had 40 years of success with ExxonMobil, starting as a production engineer and going to the top of the company. Now the question is, Is he ready to give up his loyalty to a company and to have a loyalty to a country even if the decisions he has to make as Secretary of State may be inconsistent with the best business policy for that company?

I am going to yield the floor. I see my colleague from the State of Wyoming is here. I believe this will be ongoing, so I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

NOMINATIONS OF JEFF SESSIONS AND TOM PRICE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I wish to congratulate the current Presiding Officer for his ascension to the

chair of the Indian Affairs Committee in the U.S. Senate. It is a committee with a great history of bipartisan efforts working together. It is a committee on which I was privileged to serve and still serve and of which I have been the chairman in the past. I am looking forward to the distinguished Senator from North Dakota taking over the mantle of responsibility, and I know he will continue to work hard, as he has since joining the Senate, in the efforts on behalf of so many Americans.

I also come to the floor about what is going on in the Senate with regard to confirming nominations in a Cabinet that I believe is truly an all-star Cabinet—truly an all-star Cabinet. I think it gets better as we keep confirming one nominee after another. Last week I spoke on the floor about what a great job I believe Scott Pruitt is going to do as head of the Environmental Protection Agency. Today I wish to talk about two more examples.

First, there is the nomination of our friend and colleague, Senator JEFF SESSIONS from Alabama, to be Attorney General. Those of us who have served with Senator SESSIONS over the years know he is a man of uncommon decency, of fairness, and of integrity. We know his dedication to the law is absolute.

In 1999, Senator SESSIONS came to the floor to speak in support of awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to Rosa Parks. In that speech, he said: “Equal treatment under the law is a fundamental pillar upon which our republic rests.” We saw Senator SESSIONS’ devotion to this idea again and again and again. He introduced legislation to reduce the differences in the kinds of sentences that could be handed out to people convicted of similar drug crimes. He teamed up with Senator Ted Kennedy to pass legislation protecting prisoners from sexual assault behind bars.

The job of Attorney General is to be America’s top law enforcement officer and attorney. JEFF SESSIONS has shown himself to be an outstanding attorney. He worked as a frontline prosecutor. He spent 12 years as the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Alabama. He was attorney general of the State of Alabama, and he has spent 20 years here as a U.S. Senator.

If confirmed as Attorney General, he will be one of the most qualified people ever to hold this job. These qualifications include an exceptional knowledge of how the Justice Department works and the priorities of the people who work there.

The Attorney General oversees the work of more than 100,000 people. Most of them are law enforcement, working for agencies like the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration. I think these men and women are going to find that JEFF SESSIONS is their greatest champion, and I think they are going to greet his arrival at the Justice Department with a wonderful ovation.

National law enforcement groups have already endorsed his nomination, and so have groups representing Federal and local prosecutors. He is going to enforce the laws passed by Congress in a fair and impartial manner. That is exactly what America needs in its Attorney General.

The second person I want to talk about is Congressman TOM PRICE. TOM has been nominated to be the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Just as JEFF SESSIONS has devoted his life to the law, TOM PRICE has devoted his life to caring for the health of patients and the American people.

Dr. PRICE practiced medicine for 20 years. He was medical director of the orthopedic clinic at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta. Grady Memorial Hospital is a public safety-net hospital in Atlanta, and many, many of its patients are low income. Dr. PRICE saw each and every day the challenges that people faced in America’s broken health care system, both the patients and the people who are trying to provide the care. That is why he has taken health care reform so seriously as a Member of Congress. He did as well when he was in the Georgia State legislature. He understands and he understood immediately why so many parts of ObamaCare simply would not work when they were passed and signed into law some 6 years ago. Like a lot of us, he warned the health care law would actually make things worse for millions of Americans—and TOM PRICE has proven right.

It is time for the Department of Health and Human Services to have leadership that understands that patients should not become a political tool. Congressman PRICE is actually the first medical doctor to be nominated to head the Department of Health and Human Services since 1989. That kind of knowledge and the background he has is essential for dealing with the challenges the Department faces today.

The wheels are falling off of America’s health care system. We need leaders—leaders who are more than just professional bureaucrats, which is what we have had. We need someone who understands health care deeply, and who cares about putting patients first, not politics.

TOM PRICE has shown he can reach across the aisle to get things done. It is what he did in the State legislature in Georgia, and it is what he has done in the House of Representatives here in Washington. TOM worked with Democrats to make sure that Medicare patients could continue to get access to medical equipment like blood sugar monitors and oxygen tanks. He did the same thing when he introduced a bipartisan measure to stop burdensome new regulations affecting patients who need a new hip or a new knee joint. As Secretary of Health and Human Services, he is going to listen—listen to the best arguments of both sides, and then he is going to do what is right for the health of the American people.

ObamaCare has to go. It has failed miserably. We all know that. Even Democrats in Congress who wrote the law realize how flawed it really is. It is time for us now to focus on what can be done to replace ObamaCare and make American health care work once again.

I have seen media reports that Democrats want to obstruct the nomination of TOM PRICE as well as that of JEFF SESSIONS. I expect Democrats will plan to grandstand for political purposes because they have no real objections to either person’s qualifications or credentials.

Democrats’ complaint is that they lost the Presidential election. Well, the President deserves to have his Cabinet in place. That is why Republicans didn’t object to President Obama getting seven of his Cabinet members on his very first day in office in 2009. By this point in time, President Obama had a significant number of his Cabinet—over 20 members—confirmed in 2009, and we look at where we are today, with President Trump’s Cabinet and the obstruction of the Democrats. It is unfortunate that Democrats have decided not to follow the example of Republicans when Barack Obama came to the White House.

Political spite isn’t a good enough reason for delay. Democrats need to get over it and get on with it. Attorney General of the United States and Secretary of Health and Human Services are big jobs. They are important jobs, and they are necessary jobs. It is time for the Senate to move as soon as possible to confirm both JEFF SESSIONS and TOM PRICE to the Cabinet.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant minority leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the Senator from Wyoming from the other side of the aisle is my friend. We spend time in the gym together; I go there regularly—for no apparent reason. But we are friends, and we disagree on some political issues. I just wish to clarify one or two things.

When it comes to Congressman PRICE, I don’t know him personally. He has been chosen by President Trump to head up the Department of Health and Human Services, one of the biggest and most important. He has stated, as a Member of Congress from Georgia, that he believes we should change the Social Security system as well as the Medicare system and privatize Medicare. That is a worrisome suggestion for 50 million or more Americans who count on Medicare and do not exactly look forward to being placed in the loving arms of an insurance company at some point late in their lives. So there are questions there.

But the question at hand was brought to the attention of the American public today, not in some liberal newspaper, but in the Wall Street Journal. It turns out that Congressman PRICE has been engaged in the purchase of stock that

has a direct impact on the medical profession. Whether he properly filed disclosures in buying that stock or whether he did something improper is still to be resolved.

Part of the reason the nominees for President Trump are taking longer than others is that many, like Congressman PRICE, have extensive financial holdings. We found that when a billionaire from Chicago—Penny Pritzker—was nominated for Secretary of Commerce under President Obama, it took literally 6 months for us to gather all the financial information about her and to divest her of any potential conflicts of interest. It turns out that many of these nominees did not have their ethics filings on file in time to be considered in a timely fashion, and, in some cases, information about them was found to be in conflict with reality, and now there is a further investigation necessary. It isn't just a matter of spite; it is a matter of doing our due diligence, as required by the Constitution and required in the U.S. Senate.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

A word about ObamaCare: My friend from Wyoming, a medical doctor himself, has felt strongly against the Affordable Care Act since its passage. I view it a lot differently.

There are currently 1.2 million Illinoisans—1 out of 10 in our State—who have health insurance because of the Affordable Care Act. Over half of them are now brought into the Medicaid system, the others are on insurance exchanges, and many of them have their premiums subsidized by our Federal Government.

In addition, every person in America who has a health insurance plan has benefited by the Affordable Care Act. Why? Because we took some of the worst abuses in health insurance and said: You can no longer do that and sell health insurance in this country. One example is lifetime caps—caps on the amount of money that a policy will play. Now, \$100,000 in coverage may sound like a lot, until you are diagnosed with cancer—and then it disappears in a matter of days and weeks. So we eliminated lifetime caps on coverage.

The second most important thing we did was to say: You can't discriminate against someone because they have a preexisting condition. Is there anyone alive that doesn't have some preexisting condition? If it was bad enough in the bad old days before the Affordable Care Act, that was enough to either disqualify them from health insurance or to run the premiums up to the high heavens. Now you can no longer be discriminated against because your husband has diabetes, your wife survived breast cancer, or your child has survived a cancer scare themselves. We have eliminated that in all health insurance policies.

The third thing we did was to say that every health insurance policy sold in the United States has to cover men-

tal illness and substance abuse treatment. The people who pushed for that—Democratic Senator Paul Wellstone of Minnesota and Republican Pete Domenici of New Mexico—both had family histories of mental illness, and they said health insurance ought to cover mental illness. They finally prevailed. It was included in the Affordable Care Act, so it means that, across the board, all of us who buy health insurance are buying care for mental illness.

Is substance abuse treatment important? Think about the opioid and heroin epidemic across the United States—across my State of Illinois. Where would these families be, with a person in the family suffering from addiction, if the health insurance plan didn't provide some coverage? The Affordable Care Act requires that.

When the Republicans say that they want to repeal it, the obvious question is: And then what? What happens next, when the insurance companies can stop covering these critical areas?

There is another thing. My wife and I have raised some kids who have gone through college, and when they finished college they didn't quite go into their long, permanent career. They had a bunch of jobs, looking for the right place.

I can recall calling my daughter, fresh out of the University of Wisconsin, and saying: Jen, do you have health insurance? I know you did as a student.

She said: Dad, I'm fine. I'm strong and healthy. I don't need it.

That is the last thing a father wants to hear.

Do you know what the Affordable Care Act says? My daughter—anyone's daughter—up to the age of 26 can stay on my family plan. How about that for common sense? There are 90,000 young people in Illinois protected by the family plans because of that provision. Now we hear from the Senator from Wyoming that this is a big failure and we have to repeal it.

The last thing we did is important to every senior citizen on Medicare across the United States. There used to be something called the doughnut hole. It is even hard to describe, but it related to paying seniors for their prescription drugs. Here is what it said; try to follow this: We will cover you for the first few months of the year, with Medicare paying the prescription drug cost. Then you are on your own for 3 or 4 months. Once you have delved into your own personal savings up to a certain amount, we will come back and cover you again.

Go figure. It would take a Congressman or a Senator to dream up something like that, and seniors across the country felt completely vulnerable. When they went into that period of no coverage, many of them stopped taking their drugs. That is not a good thing. So we closed that gap. We closed that doughnut hole.

What does it mean to seniors in Illinois? On average, they save \$1,000 a

year because the Affordable Care Act brought this reform to Medicare. Now the Republicans say: Let's repeal that. Do they want to explain to the seniors in my State that they now have to turn for their savings for that gap period again? We don't want to see that happen.

For 6 years, Republicans have said repeatedly that they want to repeal ObamaCare. Repeal ObamaCare. They say it in their sleep. They have vote after vote—I think 60 different votes in the House—to repeal it, knowing it would never happen with President Obama in the White House. Now, the dog done caught the bus. Here they are, in the majority in the House and the Senate with a Republican President, and their first order of business: Repeal ObamaCare.

Do you know what they are learning? All across the United States, medical health care providers—hospitals, doctors, clinics, and others—are telling them that will be a disaster. If you eliminate the Affordable Care Act without a replacement as good or better, you are going to leave chaos in the system and a lot of people without the protection of health insurance.

So after 6 years, you would think the Republicans would have a replacement plan. Right? A substitute. They have had all this time to think about it. No, not yet; they are still thinking about it, but they are determined to repeal.

I met with hospital administrators around my State last weekend and will continue to in the future. They are worried. We estimate Illinois hospitals will lose over 90,000 jobs with the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. We know that downstate hospitals and hospitals in rural areas—in many States represented here—are going to be forced to close. What happens when you close that smalltown hospital in downstate Illinois? What used to be a 20-minute ride to the hospital becomes a 1-hour drive. How important is that? Well, when you are in labor, it is important or if you just had a farm accident or you are responding to something that happened on the highway, it is critical, life-or-death important. So you would think Republicans would have a plan to keep these hospitals open. They don't. We haven't seen a substitute.

They rail against ObamaCare; they rail against the Affordable Care Act. They don't criticize the individual components I have described because they are wildly popular with the American people.

The irony of this is that we have spent 6 years trying to convince people that the Affordable Care Act, even with its flaws and faults—and it has them, but even with that, it is good for America. We got nowhere. We were beating our heads against the wall.

Then, when the Republicans took over and started talking about repeal, people were stepping back and saying: What am I going to lose if they repeal it? The approval rating for the Affordable Care Act since Donald Trump was