

have supported such an outrageous, diabolical, dangerous, damaging plan to the quality of life for so many people across our Nation.

It wasn't just that it ripped healthcare from more than 20 million people. It wasn't just that it delivered billions of dollars to the wealthiest among us. It also ensured that those with preexisting conditions wouldn't be able to get care. It was also that it would have raised our premiums an estimated 20 percent for those who were able to secure insurance.

If one set out to design the worst possible healthcare plan you could ever imagine, you probably couldn't come up with one as bad as President Trump and the Republican team came up with. It seems incredible that we are still debating the basic premise of whether healthcare should be part of a standard foundation for families to thrive here in this century. Every other developed nation understands that healthcare is so essential to quality of life, so essential for our children to thrive, so essential for our families to succeed that they make sure that, just by virtue of living in a country, you have that healthcare.

Well, I have to salute the millions of Americans who weighed in to say that this diabolical plan needed to be dumped. They filled our streets and overflowed our inboxes and flooded our phones. They made it perfectly clear that healthcare is a basic human right, not a privilege reserved for the healthy and the wealthy. I certainly agree with them. We decided collectively that we were not going to allow this diabolical plan to undo the progress we made. We made significant progress with ObamaCare. After decades of being essentially unable to change the uninsured rate, we made significant progress. There we are with a big drop in the uninsured rate—a big increase in the number of people who have access to healthcare. But we are not in that place yet where this number drops to zero. We still have 10 percent of our country that doesn't have insurance. The costs are still too high, and the deductibles and copays are too high. One out of five Americans can still not afford their prescriptions.

In addition, we have this incredibly complicated set of healthcare systems. We have Medicare and Medicaid. We have on-exchange, and we have off-exchange. We have the Children's Health Insurance Program. We have workers' compensation. We have self-insurance. We have a multitude of varieties of healthcare through the workplace—some covering just the individual, others covering the entire family, some covering just a small percent of the healthcare costs and some more. Some are certainly so complicated that even the folks who have them aren't sure what the insurance company should pay.

So we found in this conversation with Americans about healthcare that Americans weighed in very strongly

about the stresses and the challenges of ordinary Americans to secure healthcare. It is an ongoing lifelong effort. Do you have an employer who covers you but not your children? Can you get them on the Children's Health Insurance Program? Do you have an insurance plan at work that you have to contribute to, but the costs of contributing are so high that you really can't afford it? Do you opt out of that? Then, what happens? Or perhaps you are under Medicaid—up to 138 percent of the poverty level for those States that have expanded Medicaid—and you gain a small increase in your pay and maybe now you don't qualify. In the middle of the year, can you apply to the healthcare exchange? Will you get tax credits credited to you or will you have to pay a big sum at the end of the year when your taxes are reconciled? It is continuous applications, continuous change, and continuous stress. Why do we make it that hard?

In my 36 town halls a year—one in every county in Oregon, mostly in red counties because most of the counties in Oregon are red counties—I have had people coming out yearning for a simple, seamless system that says: Just by virtue of being an American, you have healthcare when you need it and you will not end up bankrupt. What is that vision all about? It is about taking an existing model, one that has worked so well for our seniors—the model of Medicare.

Folks used to come to my town halls and they would say: I am just trying to stay alive until I reach age 65 so that I can be part of that wonderful healthcare plan—that Medicare plan. So this is a well-known commodity. I have heard some of my colleagues mocking it in the last few days. Well, certainly, maybe they should get out and have town halls. Maybe they should talk to our seniors about how well this system works. Maybe they should recognize that the overhead costs are much lower—2 percent versus 20 percent, and sometimes much more in private insurance healthcare. That is more than a fifth of our healthcare dollars simply wasted—a waste that disappears with Medicare for All.

This is the type of healthcare system that addresses and changes this enormous, fractured, and stressful system. We currently spend twice as much as other developed nations per person on healthcare—twice as much as France, twice as much as Canada, twice as much as Germany, and the list goes on. Yet the healthcare we receive provides less health in America than in those countries.

We should be ashamed that our infant mortality rates are higher, even though we spend twice as many dollars per capita as those other countries. So it is clear that there is significant room for improvement. By the way, there are so many opportunities to move in this direction.

We laid out this Medicare for All plan, and I salute my colleague BERNIE

SANDERS and my additional cosponsors. There are now 17 Senators who have said: We are cosponsors to this because we know that it addresses the fractured, stressful nature of our system. We know it is more cost-effective than our current system. We know that it will lead to greater peace of mind than our current system.

Shouldn't peace of mind be what we are all about? That is the peace of mind that if your loved one gets ill or injured, they will get the care they need. The peace of mind that if your loved one is in an accident, they will get the care they need and you will not end up bankrupt.

It is time for America to have this conversation, and it is my intention, certainly, to have this conversation with the citizens of Oregon and to encourage my colleagues to have this conversation with their citizens. How can we move to a system where you can stop worrying about whether you will get the care you need, whether your loved ones will get the care they need, and that you will not end up bankrupt when you are sick or injured? That is the goal.

Let's have that conversation, America, and keep pushing toward making it a reality. I am proud to sponsor this bill. I certainly am proud to fight for quality affordable healthcare for every single American because it is a basic human right.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

CONGRATULATING THE WATERTOWN HIGH SCHOOL FIELD HOCKEY PROGRAM

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, before I start my remarks on the dangers of nuclear war, I want to take a moment to congratulate the Watertown High School field hockey program in Massachusetts.

Up until this past week, the Watertown Raiders had not lost a single field hockey game since November 12, 2008. For nearly 9 years, the Raiders have been truly perfect. Their 184-game winning streak was our Nation's longest in high school field hockey history. Their leader, Head Coach Eileen Donahue, is one of the most historic figures in Massachusetts high school athletics.

To all the former and current players, coaches, parents and supporters, I offer my congratulations on this incredible accomplishment.

Go, Watertown Raiders. Congratulations on a historic streak of victories.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. President, now on the issue of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons give the President of the United States an unprecedented and awesome power. Nuclear weapons are the most destructive force in human history. Yet, under existing laws, the President of the United States possesses unilateral authority to launch them. If the President wants to, he has the power to initiate an offensive nuclear war, even if there is no attack on the United States or its allies. This is simply unconstitutional,

undemocratic, and simply unbelievable.

Such unconstrained power flies in the face of our Constitution, which gives Congress the sole and exclusive power to declare war. While it is vital for the President to have clear authority to respond to nuclear attacks on the United States, our forces, or our allies, no U.S. President should have the power to launch a nuclear first strike without congressional approval.

Such a strike would be immoral. It would be disproportionate, and it would expose the United States to the threat of devastating nuclear retaliation, which could endanger the survival of the American people and human civilization. If we lead potential enemies to believe that we may go nuclear in response to a conventional attack, then we create the very pressure that encourages them to build nuclear arsenals and keep them on high alert. This increases the risk of inadvertent nuclear war, a prospect that is just plain unacceptable.

We have the world's most powerful conventional arsenal—the strongest Air Force, the largest Navy, and the most capable Army and Marine Corps. And we have the most powerful nuclear arsenal to deter nuclear attacks. We don't need to threaten to be the first to attack with nuclear weapons to deter others from launching attacks on us or our allies.

Nuclear weapons are meant for deterrence and not for warfighting. As President Reagan said: "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."

That is why I introduced legislation earlier this year and submitted an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, which we are now considering, to put an appropriate check on the American President's unilateral authority to launch a nuclear first strike.

Let me be clear. I am not proposing we restrict the President's authority under the Constitution to launch a nuclear attack against anyone who is carrying out a nuclear attack on the United States, our territories, or our allies. Under article II of the Constitution, the United States President has authority to repel sudden attacks as soon as our military and intelligence agencies inform him that such an enemy strike is imminent. What I have proposed does not change that.

But what I am proposing is that we take a commonsense step to check nuclear first use by prohibiting any American President from launching a nuclear first strike, except when explicitly authorized to do so by a congressional declaration of war.

Unfortunately, the need to submit this into law is more important now than it has ever been, and that is because today we have a President who is engaged in escalatory, reckless, and downright scary rhetoric with North Korea, a nation with nuclear weapons. President Trump has threatened "fire

and fury" and has declared our military "locked and loaded" and ready to attack North Korea. On what seems like a daily basis, President Trump uses the kind of inflammatory rhetoric backed by his unchecked authority to launch nuclear weapons, which highlights the very situation I described earlier.

The United States threatens military action that could include nuclear weapons. North Korea responds with increasingly provocative behavior, and the world faces an ever-increasing risk of miscalculation that can lead to nuclear war.

I have been talking about no first use and the need to provide an appropriate check on any American President for a long time, but President Trump and his Twitter account have made it painfully clear why the need for a no-first-use policy exists.

No human being should have the sole authority to initiate an unprovoked nuclear war, not any American President, including Donald Trump. As long as that power exists, it must be put in check.

We need to have this debate in the United States of America. We don't need an accidental nuclear war. We don't need nuclear weapons to be used by the United States when we have not been attacked by nuclear weapons. And if any President would want to use that power, then he should come to Congress and ask us to vote on the use of nuclear weapons in the event we have never been attacked by them. That is the least I think the Congress should do.

We have abdicated our responsibility to declare war under the Constitution for far too long. It actually began with the Korean war. Now we face the prospect of a second Korean war. If nuclear weapons are going to be used and we have not been attacked, it should be this body that votes to give the President the ability to use those weapons.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to confirm Pamela Patenaude as Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Ms. Patenaude was advanced by voice vote out of the Senate Banking Committee on June 14, and continues to receive nearly unanimous bipartisan support from affordable housing advocates, public housing agencies, and industry leaders.

This month, Senate leadership received a joint letter signed by over 60 independent housing trade groups, urging that this nomination finally be brought to the floor for a vote.

Over her distinguished career, Ms. Patenaude has touched nearly every corner of housing policy and has held leadership roles at both the local and Federal level.

This is not the first time Ms. Patenaude has been considered for confirmation by this body. Twelve years ago, the Senate confirmed her by voice

vote to become Assistant Secretary of Community Planning and Development at HUD.

The Senate recognized her back then for what she remains today: an experienced industry veteran who will provide steadfast leadership to HUD.

This vote is particularly important given the recent hurricanes in Texas and in Florida. HUD's Deputy Secretary chairs the Department's Disaster Management Group and coordinates the long-term recovery efforts of various program offices within HUD.

Ms. Patenaude would make an immediate contribution in this critical leadership role, drawing from her experience responding to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita during her time as Assistant Secretary in the Bush administration.

I am eager to work with Ms. Patenaude on that response, as well as other key issues within HUD's jurisdiction.

I urge my colleagues to vote to confirm Ms. Patenaude today, and I also urge the Senate to take up votes on other HUD nominees, so that HUD can have the key leadership in place that it needs to best serve its important mission.

Thank you.

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

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

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the nomination of Pam Patenaude to be Deputy Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Ms. Patenaude comes to this nomination with valuable experience in the field of housing and community development and a history of affordable housing advocacy. In her previous work at HUD, she helped administer the Department's disaster relief efforts following Hurricane Katrina.

While I don't agree with Ms. Patenaude on every element of housing policy, I respect her experience, and I respect her government service in her recent work to raise awareness about the affordable housing shortage facing so many families.

I agreed with her in her testimony in front of the Banking Committee that "as a nation we must recognize that housing is not just a commodity but a foundation for economic mobility and personal growth." That is why I was so troubled that during her nomination hearing, Ms. Patenaude defended the administration's terrible budget for the agency she has been nominated to help lead. The President would cut more than \$7 billion, 15 percent, from HUD's budget, right in the midst of a shortage of affordable housing, about which she so articulately spoke. This budget cut

would eliminate programs like community development block grants and the HOME Program. These grants help our cities and small towns repair their infrastructure, retrofit homes for seniors and people with disabilities, combat homelessness among families, veterans, and people struggling with mental illness and substance abuse.

Just last week, Congress approved new CDBG funds to speed up disaster recovery assistance to communities upended by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma. Ms. Patenaude came in front of this committee and defended those budget cuts—programs for which she has advocated but doing, apparently, the dirty work for the administration and for the HUD Secretary, she agreed with this budget.

This budget would devastate public housing. It would cut funding for major repairs by some 70 percent. Again, in the face of substandard housing, unavailable shortages of affordable housing, it would cut funding for repairs by 70 percent, and it would expose more families to poor building conditions and health hazards.

I have told this story before on the floor. My wife and I live in Cleveland, OH, in ZIP Code 44105. Ten years ago, in 2007, that ZIP Code had more foreclosures than any ZIP Code in the United States of America. Within a not very great distance from my home, there is block after block of homes that are in need of repair—rentals and people living in homes they own—far too much devastation, crying out for some help from this HUD budget. Yet this administration turns their back on them.

It reduces funding for lead hazard control and healthy housing grants. Secretary Carson, whom I voted for—and not many Democrats did—I voted for him because he is a neurosurgeon. He didn't know much about housing when he took this job, but he knew about lead paint and what the exposure to lead meant to babies and infants. Yet this budget cuts lead hazard control.

I know, in my city, the public health department has said that in the old sections in my city of Cleveland, where homes are generally 60, 70, 80 years old, virtually almost every single home has high toxic levels of lead. Do we not care about what we sentence the next generation of children to by doing nothing about the lead-based paint around the windows, the lead around the pipes? All of that we have a moral responsibility to do something about.

These cuts to HUD programs have generated bipartisan concern about their effects on our communities, including concerns raised, in fact, by Republican members of the Banking Committee.

I am voting against Ms. Patenaude's nomination because I can't support the direction the President's budget proposes for HUD, proposes for housing, proposes for our communities, and proposes for our country. She has pledged

allegiance—in spite of her background, her skills, and her advocacy inside and outside the Department since, she has pledged allegiance to that disastrous vision and those horrible budget cuts to HUD.

I hope she uses her experience and knowledge to convince others in the administration of the importance of the Federal Government's role in housing and community development.

Too often, in this administration, we see officials who come to their agencies with valuable experience and they quickly set it aside to push an agenda that does not serve working families in Appalachia, OH, and inner-city Ohio, in inner-ring suburbs, and affluent suburbs.

We have two very visible crises; one on the gulf coast and one stretching from Florida to the Virgin Islands, which we absolutely must tackle. We have a less visible crisis as well—not because of flooding or hurricanes but because decent affordable housing is beyond the reach of more and more Americans.

Ms. Patenaude is intelligent. She has good insight. She knows this. She knows in her heart what this budget would mean to a whole lot of Americans who work full time, who have generally low incomes—\$8, \$10, \$12 an hour—who simply can't find affordable, clean decent housing. Her support for that budget will make the problem worse, and it is very troubling. I ask my colleagues to vote no on her nomination.

DATA BREACHES IN CREDIT REPORTING AGENCIES

Mr. President, last week, 143 million Americans—in essence, half of our country—had their personal information exposed through no fault of their own. We are talking about names, dates of birth, Social Security numbers, addresses, and probably much more.

Equifax, one of three huge data collection companies in our country, makes their money off of this information, and they failed to protect it.

If a student at Bowling Green, in Northwest Ohio, or a homeowner in Springfield, OH, fails to make that monthly payment for her student loan debt or for their home mortgage, Equifax dings them on their credit report. Yet Equifax, even after last year when they allowed the breach of 400,000 employees of an Ohio company, Kroger—one of our best companies domiciled in Ohio—they just don't seem accountable when that happens. This is the worst example, so far, that we have seen.

I spoke yesterday on the phone with Bill of Hamilton, OH, who is one of those 143 million Americans whose personal data was exposed to criminals, to somebody who can use this information, use this data, on literally up to 143 million Americans. Bill and his wife are retired. They have worked hard to pay their bills. They have excellent credit. He went to the Equifax website

after this happened and discovered his information may have been breached.

He talked about how worried he was. He talked about, after all his family's hard work, after years of following the rules, that someone could get access to his personal information and shred his credit history.

This is a company whose job it is to gather this data and to protect this data, and they failed, without being held accountable.

I am worried for folks in Ohio like Bill.

I am really worried for servicemembers around this country whose private information might be compromised. The servicemember's credit history isn't just important when they want to buy a home or open up a new credit card. For a servicemember, a credit history damaged by hackers could mean losing their security clearance and maybe their job along with it. These patriotic men and women move around the country, around the world. They are not especially well paid. Their families rely on good credit to get housing and jobs wherever our military chooses to send them.

Life for military families is stressful enough. I know that from Ray Patterson Air Force Base, one of the most important Air Force Bases in this country, near Dayton. I know that from meeting with these families. I know that when I see the kinds of consumer protections the Federal consumer bureau has provided to these servicemembers. So often financial companies try to prey on these servicemembers who, as I said, are not paid well. Maybe a servicemember is deployed overseas and the family struggles at home without one of their parents being present and with the generally low income they make. They sacrifice enough without them also having to worry about credit corporations and this company's breach putting them at risk.

That is why I filed an amendment to the NDAA that would provide servicemembers with crucial consumer protections. First, the bill requires credit reporting agencies such as Equifax, TransUnion and Experian, the three big companies, to implement a cost-free and convenient way for all servicemembers to be able to lock down their credit reports if they think they are at risk.

While credit freezes are currently available in some States, there is no national standard. There are often charges for starting and stopping a freeze, and it can be hard to figure out whom they should even contact. This amendment would create a standard simple and free process for servicemembers to protect their credit histories.

There is so much more in this bill that will matter to servicemembers. We have an opportunity right now to move quickly to make sure this breach does not put our military men and women at risk.