

live a healthier, more productive life in their communities rather than in institutions.

That is just a little bit of the good Medicaid does for folks from Portland, OR, to Portland, ME. Under the Graham-Cassidy-Heller proposal, that is gone—simply gone. The plan ends expanded Medicaid coverage which 11 million Americans count on right now. It caps Medicaid and guts hundreds of billions of dollars in support from the Federal Government. In effect, it is like telling States, good luck, and telling them you can make the hard decisions about which Americans are going to get adequate healthcare and who are going to be those unfortunate souls who go without.

My view is, this is going to lead to destitution for older Americans who count on Medicaid for nursing home care. It also represents a massive transfer of dollars from States which expanded Medicaid to States which chose not to.

History tells us that the most vulnerable Americans without a voice or a powerful lobby are the ones who are going to be the worst off. Now, I have heard my colleagues—Senator CASSIDY, in particular—claim that this bill is modeled on the Children's Health Insurance Program—which is a block-granted program—and that means all supporters of CHIP should support Graham-Cassidy-Heller.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Children's Health Insurance Program has been an extraordinarily successful program for more than 20 years, now covering 9 million youngsters. Part of that success is due to its reliance on a strong Medicaid Program. If Medicaid and the rest of the healthcare system is block-granted and slashed by hundreds of billions of dollars, the pillars that support a successful Children's Health Insurance Program will crumble. They will lose their structural support. A vote in favor of Graham-Cassidy is a vote to demolish successful healthcare programs like the Children's Health Insurance Program and its promise of affordable healthcare for millions of kids and their families.

There is one more step that the Graham-Cassidy-Heller bill takes that is different from previous versions. Rather than reducing the tax credits that help Americans get help—similar to earlier Republican approaches—again, this bill just chuck them out, gets rid of them, gone. That means asking States to use their Federal health block grant for a whole host of competing healthcare priorities, in effect, pitting vulnerable Americans against each other and not having enough at the table to meet the critical needs of some of our most vulnerable people—people who, day in and day out, are walking on an economic tightrope, trying to balance their food costs against their medical costs and their medical costs against housing.

Graham-Cassidy-Heller is a recipe for disaster. This proposal, again, opens

loopholes for insurance companies that, as I described, we thought we had closed, thought we had finally closed the book on the days when healthcare wasn't just for the healthy and wealthy. That is what happened when we had discrimination against those with preexisting conditions. If you had a preexisting condition and you were wealthy—just pay the bill. If you didn't have any preexisting conditions, there was nothing to worry about.

For the millions of people who finally got some peace of mind at night when we eliminated discrimination against those with preexisting conditions, this brings back that ugly prospect that a key consumer protection, the protection that bars discrimination against those who have preexisting conditions, is just tossed aside—just as what looks to be the setting aside of essential health benefits that all Americans are entitled to receive.

It was pretty obvious during the TrumpCare debate that unraveling the consumer protections that our people count on today leads to the entire system falling apart, and the vulnerable bear the brunt of the pain.

Many of our friends and neighbors have spent the year raising their voices and showing up to stop bad healthcare legislation. Thanks to their grassroots efforts, the partisan approach that I have described as being used here again has been stopped multiple times.

I wanted to come on the floor tonight to say to people in every community across our great country that, once again, we need people power. Once again, we need them to stand up and say that we don't want to turn back the clock on the healthcare needs of the most vulnerable, like seniors and the disabled and our kids. Once again, we hope they will speak out all across the country.

I am going to be having townhall meetings this upcoming weekend after the Jewish holiday. You can be sure that I am going to hear a lot from the people of Oregon about this. I am very hopeful that, once again, people power around America is going to come forward and say to those who are talking about supporting Graham-Cassidy-Heller that this is a mistake, that they don't want to turn back the clock with respect to healthcare; they want to move forward. Instead of turning back the clock, what they are looking for is leadership, for example, that will hold down their prescription drug costs.

I have introduced legislation to require these companies to publicly justify raising their prices. We have had Senators introduce a host of bills. That is what we ought to be doing—talking about how we are going to improve American healthcare.

My colleague from Illinois mentioned the Children's Health Insurance Program, which Chairman HATCH and I worked with our Finance colleagues to get introduced, and there is the Community Health Center Program. I could go on and on about opportunities for

bipartisanship to take the country in the right direction rather than in the wrong direction. Instead, it doesn't look as though that is going to be on offer any time soon. What is going to be on offer is a proposal that turns back the clock, guts Medicaid, harms seniors, harms the vulnerable, and I think would be a major mistake.

My bottom line has long been that for changes to the healthcare system to be sustainable and lasting, they have to be bipartisan. That is why I mentioned an effort that I was involved in. Several of my colleagues who co-sponsored the bill I am talking about have been supportive of that for quite some time.

We know Republicans and Democrats know how to write bipartisan legislation. But what the Graham-Cassidy-Heller bill seeks to do is just the opposite—to use the most deeply partisan process the Senate knows, called reconciliation. It basically says: Our way or the highway—not interested in trying to find common ground.

I will point out that didn't end too well earlier when we talked about healthcare. I came to the floor tonight to make the case that we cannot let partisan reconciliation tactics win on this key issue. We ought to be working together to improve healthcare on a bipartisan basis, in a way that helps people all across the country.

I have mentioned—this is particularly important to me—a number of bills that colleagues on both sides of the aisle have worked on that would help improve the lives of the American people. Graham-Cassidy-Heller does not meet that test. I hope my colleagues will reject it, and I hope that all across the country, from one corner of America to every other, people will step up and they will say, as I have said on this floor: The political change doesn't start in Washington, DC, and then trickle down; it is bottom up. It is bottom up, as people come forward and say "That is not the way to go" and say "Here is the way that really would make sense and make our lives better."

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein.

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

(At the request of Mr. McCONNELL, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

HURRICANE IRMA RECOVERY

• Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, due to ongoing efforts from Hurricane Irma, which devastated many parts of Florida, I am staying in my state to assess the damage and help marshal the full capacity of recovery resources available to us. Today I met with U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue and personally showed him various parts of Florida's agriculture lands that were damaged by Hurricane Irma.●

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I was unavoidably absent for rollcall vote No. 198, the motion to invoke cloture on H.R. 2810, the National Defense Authorization Act, as amended. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was unavoidably absent for rollcall vote No. 199, passage of H.R. 2810, as amended, the National Defense Authorization Act. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.●

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF MOUNT AIRY MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

• Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, today I stand to honor the 100th anniversary of the Mount Airy Missionary Baptist Church, located on Maffitt Avenue in St. Louis, MO. This impressive 100th anniversary milestone speaks volumes about the tremendous impact Mount Airy Church has had on its congregation, community, and the broader St. Louis community.

First organized as a prayer band on August 8, 1917, Mount Airy has had many homes throughout its 100-year history. Over its history, while its base home address might have changed, the Mount Airy membership and effect of its faith leadership grew.

Today Mount Airy is a thriving house of worship led by pastor Reverend Charles J. Brown, Sr. Pastor Brown received an honorary doctorate degree of divinity from Western Bible College, becoming the first pastor in the history of Mount Airy Missionary Baptist Church to receive an honorary degree.

Over the years, the church has expanded its ministries to engage more people and positively influence thousands of lives. Mount Airy Church has been innovative and compassionate in finding ways to reach their congregation and the community. The commitment of Pastor Brown, all of Mount Airy Missionary Baptist Church leader-

ship, and its entire congregation to studying the word of God and faithfully living it sets an incredible example for all Missourians.

Congratulations again to all connected with Mount Airy Missionary Baptist Church on its 100-year anniversary.●

REMEMBERING GRACE SHU TSAO-WU

• Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, today I wish to commemorate the life of Grace Shu Tsao-Wu, a dedicated entrepreneur and activist.

Ms. Tsao-Wu passed away on August 10, 2017. She is remembered for her entrepreneurial spirit and unyielding passion in her work.

As the founder of a successful company, Ms. Tsao-Wu brought her creative energy to Chicago. She was steadfast in her community leadership and always challenged others to be their best.

Ms. Tsao-Wu leaves behind not only a great legacy, but also a shining light that serves as an inspiration to many.

Thank you.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 3:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 3284. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to establish a Joint Counterterrorism Awareness Workshop Series, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3697. An act to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act with respect to aliens associated with criminal gangs, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 3284. An act to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to establish a Joint Counterterrorism Awareness Workshop Series, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 3697. An act to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act with respect to aliens associated with criminal gangs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. JOHNSON, from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, without amendment:

H.R. 117. A bill to require the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to submit a report regarding certain plans regarding assistance to applicants and grantees during the response to an emergency or disaster (Rept. No. 115-158).

H.R. 1679. A bill to ensure that the Federal Emergency Management Agency's current

efforts to modernize its grant management system includes applicant accessibility and transparency, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 115-159).

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. BLUNT (for himself, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. LANKFORD, and Mr. CRUZ):

S. 1823. A bill to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to clarify that houses of worship are eligible for certain disaster relief and emergency assistance on terms equal to other eligible private nonprofit facilities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. McCONNELL:

S. 1824. A bill to reform the Appalachian Regional Commission, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. BALDWIN, Mrs. ERNST, and Mr. JOHNSON):

S. 1825. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to improve the accuracy of geographic adjustment factors under the Medicare program and to permanently extend certain adjustments to such factors for certain localities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BLUMENTHAL:

S. 1826. A bill for the relief of Adrian Emin; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. BROWN, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. MENENDEZ):

S. 1827. A bill to extend funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. REED (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. BROWN, Mr. KING, Mr. FRANKEN, and Mr. WHITEHOUSE):

S. 1828. A bill to change the date for regularly scheduled general elections for Federal office to the first Saturday and Sunday after the first Friday in November in every even-numbered year; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mrs. FISCHER (for herself and Mr. BOOKER):

S. Res. 260. A resolution designating September 2017 as "School Bus Safety Month"; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. MURKOWSKI:

S. Res. 261. A resolution recognizing the month of September 2017 as "Alaska Wild Salmon Month"; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. BOOZMAN (for himself, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. TESTER, Mr. BROWN, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. CRAPO, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. UDALL, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. DAINES, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SULLIVAN, and Mr. BURR):

S. Res. 262. A resolution commemorating the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Air Force as an independent military service and celebrating the Air Force for 70 years of serving and defending the United States; considered and agreed to.