

part of that is to deal with the waivers that are in the Affordable Care Act. We have guardrails to make sure States use waivers but do not compromise the protections that are in the statute. So let's make it easier for States to implement a reinsurance program which could also bring down rates. Quite frankly, I didn't see anyone object to those two suggestions that were made, which would certainly help.

There are other things I hope we can do. The three main reasons given by the insurance carriers in Maryland for the premium increases are, No. 1, the uncertainty of the cost-sharing payments; No. 2, the reinsurance program; and, No. 3, that we are not enforcing the requirement that everybody be in the pool. We don't do that. You get those that are at the highest risk who are going to come in, but those who feel like they are not going to be using the policies stay out, and then we have adverse risk selection and therefore higher premiums than there should be.

So we really need to do a better job to try to get people into the plans. That is why many of us have been urging our appropriators to provide the funds so we can inform people about the advantages of having healthcare coverage and we can get a broader market in there. I certainly hope a law is passed by Congress that requires the coverage would be enforced. These are things I think we all could do.

There are other issues I hope we can deal with that I think will help all people, in addition to the 1 to 2 percent who need immediate help, as well as bring down the entirety of our healthcare costs. Part of that is to bring down healthcare costs generally. We all know prescription drugs are too expensive in this country. We pay twice what other countries pay. One simple way is to get the same discounts for Medicare as we get for Medicaid. My understanding is that saves billions of dollars. It was in my legislation, just one simple way. I think that if you can collect the bargaining power of the Medicare marketplace, we can certainly get better prices than we get by using a divided market.

So there are things we can do. We can have a better delivery system for providing healthcare to people in this country. I have talked about this many times—collaborative and integrative care models. In Maryland, we have Mosaic, which is a behavioral health facility, working with Sheppard Pratt, a mental health hospital. They worked together in order to have a more efficient delivery system. We need to encourage those types of models that use integrative care to bring down healthcare costs.

Lastly, we need more competition. Yes, I have always supported a public option under the exchanges. I think that makes sense.

We have a lot of other proposals that have been given. Let's sit down and talk about these proposals to see if we can't find ways to make our system better.

We have, once again, reached a situation where the majority has pulled the budget reconciliation, this time permanently, from the fiscal year 2017 calendar year. Let us start the new year that begins on October 1—the new fiscal year—with a commitment from Democrats and Republicans to work together, to share our best ideas, to make sure our children are protected by the extension of the CHIP program, to make sure policies that are currently in place that protect our constituents such as the therapy cap relief are extended.

Let's join together so the Affordable Care Act can be made stronger, particularly in stabilizing the problems in the individual marketplace, and help bring down the growth rate of healthcare costs. That is what we should be working on now, and I encourage my colleagues to do just that.

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

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

#### BURMA

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, anyone who watches the news, reads the newspaper, or goes on social media knows there are a lot of bad things happening in our world. Folks at home and across the globe are confronting devastations from hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, wars, and forest fires, as in my home State. Tensions between the United States and North Korea have never been higher, reaching a dangerous level. The world is watching all of this with bated breath.

In the midst of this deluge of news, a human rights catastrophe is unfolding virtually unnoticed. I am talking about the members of the Burmese military engaging in horrific acts of unthinkable violence against the Rohingya—a Muslim minority population in a predominantly Buddhist nation.

The Burmese military, along with civilian accomplices, have slaughtered more than 3,000 innocent civilians. They have raped thousands of Rohingya women. They have beheaded children as young as 6 years old. They have burned countless villages to the ground. Through these brutal acts, the Burmese military has driven half a million Rohingya refugees to camps in nearby Bangladesh, with Burmese soldiers continuing to shoot at them as they try to cross the border—a border, by the way, along which landmines have been laid by the Burmese military.

The brutality of what is happening in that country is truly beyond comprehension. The Burmese Government calls it a security operation, but we need to call it exactly what it is—eth-

nic cleansing. So often I have heard the words “never again,” that the United States will stand up to ethnic cleansing. This is one of those moments when we must stand up.

What is happening in Burma is a crime against humanity. As a country, we have more responsibility to take a stand and to speak out against it, to make the world take notice of the atrocities, call for their end, and to work toward their end.

The Rohingya are a people trapped in a cycle of violence and persecution by the Burmese Government and military. The Government of Burma has turned them into stateless people—refusing to recognize them, refusing to give them citizenship in spite of the fact that much of the Rohingya community has been there for centuries. They need our help.

The Burma Government has adopted laws that ban the Rohingyas from traveling without official permission, from owning land, from securing a public education, from obtaining employment by either a state or private business.

When the Burmese Government says that it will welcome back the refugees who can prove their citizenship, they are being completely disingenuous and completely treacherous, because they know—and the whole world should know—that the very laws of Burma make it impossible for the Rohingya to prove their citizenship since they have been denied citizenship by the Government of Burma. We cannot sit idly by and let ethnic cleansing continue.

One nation that has stepped up is Bangladesh. As the leaders of Burma have persecuted the Rohingya and burned the villages and shot the refugees as they were fleeing, the Government of Bangladesh has opened its door. It has proceeded to allow humanitarian groups access and the United Nations access. This is commendable, but more needs to be done. These refugee camps are overcrowded. There are not enough supplies, clean toilets, food, or clean water. Doctors Without Borders says that they are on the brink of a “public health disaster.” Unlike Bangladesh, other countries have yet to speak up.

Indeed, I am concerned by reports that some factions within India have been explicitly, publicly seeking to expel India's own Rohingya population. It is important for the international community to weigh in with them and to ask them to respect international law and to protect the Rohingya refugees. India knows full well that there is nowhere to send them. If they send them back to Burma, there will just be more persecution of the men, the women, and the children.

It underscores the fact that the Rohingya need help and that the world should answer the call. As we do, we must use what influence we have to put an end to the violence and the persecution of this ethnic minority. We need to call on Burma's leaders to protect these minorities, not to assist in the

persecution. We need to call on the Government of Burma to immediately give humanitarian groups access to the Rohingya who are trapped in Burma, in what some have described as concentration camps. We need to call on Burma's leaders to provide the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees who have been forced to flee their homes and villages with a safe and assisted right of return.

In addition, the Burmese Government—the Burmese nation—needs to figure out how to end the root causes of this conflict—an age-old ethnic and religious conflict—and find a way to embrace the diversity within their nation. Certainly, this is not the first time that the tensions have erupted into violence. It has happened time and time and time again, but this is the worst we have ever seen.

Kofi Annan, the former U.N. Secretary General, is the current chairman of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. He and his team have called on Burma to take the appropriate actions to end this cycle of violence, this cycle of radicalization.

The entire Rohingya community is counting on us—the world—to notice and to act. We must immediately see an end to the violence, full access for humanitarian organizations, cooperation with and access for the United Nations fact finding mission, the safe return of refugees, and the implementation of the full set of recommendations from Kofi Annan's report.

It is also critical that the United States and the international community continue to shed light on this horrific problem, provide sustained aid and support to the refugees in Burma and in Bangladesh, and take action to show other repressive governments that there will be consequences for pursuing this type of persecution, starting with a strong U.N. Security Council resolution.

International action to end this violence, increase humanitarian assistance, and extend our aid to the Rohingya people is the right thing to do. I pray that together we will answer that call.

I also thank my colleagues who have already been engaged in this issue. There are a number of them, but I am particularly aware of Senator Richard Durbin's, Senator JOHN McCAIN's, and Senator BEN CARDIN's involvement and leadership.

Let's build on that foundation to have the Senate demonstrate attention to this issue through letters, and we should also try to arrange a Senate trip to visit both Burma and Bangladesh in order to draw additional international attention and build momentum for action.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### HURRICANE RECOVERY EFFORTS AND TARGETED TAX RELIEF

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, it has been quite a few weeks now since Harvey hit and, then, Irma. Now Maria has devastated the island of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Of course, my gaze has been firmly on the devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey back in my home State of Texas. Yet we are joined together with those who suffered under Irma and Maria, and we will remain steadfastly with them as we all work to recover from these terrible hurricanes.

Last week, I rode in a Black Hawk helicopter with Russ Poppe, as well as our Adjutant General, John Nichols. Mr. Poppe is executive director of the Harris County Flood Control District. We were able to survey in the air things I had seen up close during several trips back home, the wreckage of the land and livelihoods.

It is an emotional thing for families and homeowners to basically take all of their worldly possessions out to the front of their house and put it in the front yard because it is completely ruined as a result of the water, along with things like the drywall, trying to attack the mold before it grows and makes the house uninhabitable.

We saw from about 10,000 feet in the air what we had previously seen from the ground, but from the air, you definitely get a different perspective on the waterlogged landscape. You see so much more. You see the levees, the reservoirs, the areas hit. You see the damaged goods and drywall that people have taken out of their homes as the first step toward recovery. It definitely has an impression on you, particularly with the size and scale of the affected area. It is really hard to believe until you see it from that perspective.

So when I took off my headset and sunglasses—and by the way, Speaker PAUL RYAN joined us on that particular trip, and we all appreciate his being there. When we stepped off the chopper, what I thought about was not only what we have done so far but how much further we still had to go. It is not just about building materials, street and roof repairs, or even the temporary housing that people need, although all of those things are surely important. We need to remember that the remedies are not going to be one-size-fits-all. We need broad support, but we also need targeted and narrow support to help people get back on their feet. We need to keep each family in mind and what their own particular needs may be depending on their particular circumstances.

As I started out to say, it is not just Texas we are talking about anymore; it is Florida, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands too. We all remember that those places were hit by Hurricanes Irma and Maria right after Texas was hit by Harvey.

I want to make one thing clear, though: We in Texas stand together

with our fellow Americans who suffered from Hurricanes Maria and Irma, as well as those who suffered from other natural disasters occurring in and around our country, and we will do everything we can to help the people who were harmed and damaged, even devastated by these terrible storms. We will help them fight to get back on their feet, to recover, and to return their lives to some form of normalcy.

One way we can work together and deliver relief to different people in different geographic areas is in providing temporary tax relief. Now, I know this sounds kind of like a small thing to do, but if you think about it, this is a thousand-year storm. Hurricane Harvey dropped 34 trillion gallons of water on the same area over a period of about 5 or so days. Many people were not in the hundred-year floodplain, which is typically where you would buy flood insurance, so many people suffered losses that were not covered by flood insurance. What many of these folks will have to do is dip into their retirement savings and other savings in order to help to get life back to normal. This relief will help folks get back on their feet as they rebuild their homes and businesses and neighborhoods in the wake of these hurricanes.

We recently passed—earlier this afternoon—a Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization, but it also included the tax package I am talking about now that provides this targeted relief. These provisions will help hurricane victims in all of the devastated areas keep more of their paycheck, first and foremost, but be able to deduct the cost of their property damage on their tax return and encourage even more Americans to generously donate to hurricane relief to help their neighbors and employees.

I know this tax package is a small matter. It is not a panacea and certainly not a cure-all, and it is not supposed to fix every storm-related problem or absolve us from honoring our ongoing responsibilities in the days ahead. But as John Steinbeck once said, “and now that you don't have to be perfect, you can just be good,” and I think these are good reforms. They will complement other measures by the Federal Government, as well as other State and local actors.

Similar provisions were introduced in a noncontroversial section of the FAA reauthorization bill that unfortunately House Democrats, led by Leader PELOSI, tried to block earlier this week. Despite the delays, I am pleased that the House acted a second time earlier today to ensure that this relief is delivered to those who need it most—again, not just in Texas but in Florida, the Virgin Islands, and in Puerto Rico, which reportedly has been devastated. Now we in this Chamber seem to have finally gotten the message, too, by passing this relief just this very afternoon as part of the FAA bill.

Our colleague from Florida, Representative CARLOS CURBELO, said