

On January 1, many health centers in Connecticut will lose more than half of their funding, and they will shut their doors to thousands and thousands of people like this man who wouldn't receive healthcare but for community health centers.

In rural America, the slashing of community health center funding will be absolutely devastating because sometimes it is these health centers that are the only way for people to get care, particularly mental health care and addiction. Community health center patients are spending this holiday season trying to digest the news that they may be shut out from their psychiatrists. They may no longer be able to see their child's primary care doctor come January 1. A 70-percent cut is not something you can manage with efficiencies; it means an elimination of services.

Faye is from Norwalk, CT. She came to this country when she was 11. She now has DACA status. She, like so many other Dreamers, has done everything we asked. Faye went to school. She got an advanced degree. She is now holding down two jobs—one of them as a radiology scheduler, working in our healthcare system. She is working two jobs because she wants to have access to the American dream of home ownership, and she is saving and saving so that she can buy a house. Now she is faced with being deported to a country that she doesn't recognize. She has been in the United States for 19 years. She lived in Connecticut for 16 years. She is spending her holiday season—as are the other 800,000 DACA recipients in this country—fearing that her life as she knows it is going to end at the beginning of next year.

Christmas, the holiday season, is not about presents. It is not about those Christmas specials. It is about people. It is about recommitting ourselves to this uniquely American notion that we are all in this together and that we are weaker as a whole if individuals who live amongst us are in crisis, especially individuals who have done everything we have asked and have played by the rules. That is Adrianna and Faye—people who are going to have something taken from them and their loved ones and are going to be put into crisis because we will not do our job.

By the end of this week, we have to protect these Dreamers, we have to provide a permanent extension for health center funding, and we have to provide a permanent extension for children's healthcare insurance funding because it is our job and also because it is cruel to send all of these millions of families into the holidays with that kind of anxiety while we all sit around our holiday tables safe and sound.

My kids remind me over and over again about what they learned from these Christmas specials. Christmas isn't about the presents. It is not about the trees. It is not about the decorations. The holidays are about our commitment to one another. We can re-up

on that commitment this week by doing the right thing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

RECOGNIZING THE COMMISSIONING OF THE USS "LITTLE ROCK"

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the commissioning of the USS *Little Rock*, a *Freedom*-class littoral combat ship. I was proud to celebrate this historic occasion with all who gathered for the commissioning in Buffalo, NY, this past weekend.

It is an honor to have one of the Navy's more versatile warships named after our State's capital city. The USS *Little Rock*'s logo features one of the most recognizable images associated with Arkansas—the Razorback. The University of Arkansas football team was given the nickname after the head coach at the time said the team played like a bunch of razorback hogs. I am confident this crew, known as the Warhawgs, will carry on that same work ethic. It has been more than four decades since the Navy had a ship named after the city of Little Rock, and we are thrilled that it will again be represented in the Navy's fleet.

Saturday marked the first time in the history of the Navy that a ship was commissioned alongside her namesake. This special occasion brought together members of the original USS *Little Rock* and those like LT Robert Dyer from Mountainburg, AK, who is a member of the current crew.

During its time as a light cruiser and then as a guided missile cruiser, the original USS *Little Rock* and its crew were vital to defeating the growing threats of its time. The new USS *Little Rock* is just as critical to our Navy's sea power. This ship and the strength and resolve of the Warhawg crew are the future of the Navy, offering unique capabilities to defend against evolving threats around the globe.

There are things this Chamber and our colleagues in the House of Representatives can do to ensure that the Navy has the resources to stay ahead of the threats our adversaries pose to us and our allies, and that begins with passing individual appropriations bills. As Congress continues discussions for fiscal year 2018 funding, it serves as a reminder that continuing resolutions are an inefficient method to keep the government operating. We should be approving individual appropriations bills instead of relying on continuing resolutions.

The starts and stops in the budgeting process impact the Defense Department and the Navy significantly. They certainly slow down the already long timetable to achieve the goal of a 355-ship fleet. Continuing resolutions negatively impact our military ratings and take our eyes off the focus of eliminating wasteful spending. They hinder Navy's leaders' ability to plan and

purchase equipment in support of its missions. They restrict the Navy from starting new programs or eliminating old and unneeded ones.

Earlier this month, Navy Secretary Spencer said the service wasted \$4 billion since 2011 because of continuing resolutions. This could have gone a long way toward growing our fleet. Instead, it is gone. A continuing resolution means that the Navy is operating on the previous year's budget level and last year's priorities. It means delays in shipbuilding and ship repair. It also means reducing training opportunities, flying hours, and steaming days. That forces more requirements onto the operational fleet, which is already stretched thin after decades of constant worldwide deployment. Secretary of Defense James Mattis has said that the longer the continuing resolution, the greater the consequences for our force.

Funding the government is the basic responsibility of Washington. It is an obligation that my colleagues and I on the Senate Appropriations Committee take very seriously as we craft the appropriations bills, set priorities, and make difficult decisions on how to spend taxpayer dollars.

We must return to a process in which we debate and pass annual spending bills in order to provide much needed predictability to our military leaders, as well as other agencies of government. We can make this happen by returning to regular order and passing individual appropriations bills. I can't say that enough. We owe it to our servicemembers, their families, and all Americans. We owe it to the crew of the USS *Little Rock*.

Admittedly, Little Rock is not the first place most people think of when you mention the Navy. Our State doesn't border an ocean. But now the State capital will once again have a place on the high seas. This is a tremendous honor for the city of Little Rock, and I know the ship and its crew will make Arkansas proud.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the clock is ticking ever closer to the end of the year. We still need to fund the government by Friday. We still need to lift the spending caps equally for defense and urgent domestic priorities,

such as combatting the opioid crisis, improving healthcare for veterans, and building rural infrastructure. We must extend the FISA program and shore up pensions for over 1 million Americans. We still need to reauthorize CHIP and end the sabotage of our healthcare markets. We have had a bipartisan deal on a stabilization package for months now. It is a product that should have been easy to include in the end-year deal. After all, it is the product of bipartisan negotiations between Chairman ALEXANDER and Ranking Member MURRAY, two of our most effective Senators. But now, because the Republicans are repealing the individual mandate in their tax bill, the Alexander-Murray deal will not have its intended effect. Even worse, Speaker RYAN has just said the agreement will not pass the House unless the Hyde language is attached to it—another eleventh hour partisan demand on a bill that has already been negotiated in the Senate. What should have been an easy addition to the year-end package is getting more difficult by the hour because of Republican demands.

We still need to pass disaster supplemental funding to aid storm-stricken parts of our country—California, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, as well as Texas, Louisiana, and Florida. The disaster supplemental bill coming out of the House, while it has much better funding levels than the administration's proposal, still does not treat Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands fairly. It does not provide for cost-sharing waivers, and it doesn't include enough funding for resiliency, mitigation, Medicaid, or drinking water infrastructure. It is a step in the right direction but not good enough.

I would reiterate my plea. Texas and the Texas delegation have constantly criticized government funding. All of a sudden, now that there is a disaster, they want money. Fine. Yet what about that \$10 billion rainy day fund? Let Texas spend that. I guarantee you that if it were in a blue State, some of our friends from Texas would be calling for it—the very same people who opposed aid to Sandy, the very same people who have relished putting State and local deductibility in the bill. Well, what is good for the goose is good for the gander. Let Texas dip into its \$10 billion fund before it gets FEMA money. That is what seems fair and right, particularly for those who don't want to see Federal Government spending increase.

Of course, last, but certainly not least, we still need to protect the Dreamers—young people brought into this country through no fault of their own, many of them who know no other country but ours. These are people who are in our Armed Forces—over 800—who are going to our schools, who are working in our factories and offices and stores. They, like everybody else—like our ancestors—want to be Americans. They contribute to America. They help America.

Yet there are people on the other side of the aisle who have this nasty immigration attitude that affects the Dreamers and everybody else. It is so un-American. It is so against the statue with the torch in the harbor in the city in which I live. It is so against what the American people believe. Eighty percent want to help the Dreamers. Yet we are stymied so far, and 1,000 Dreamers are losing their status each week.

On all of these things, the time to act is now. Bipartisan negotiations continue to seek a compromise to ensure DACA protections as well as to provide additional border security. We Democrats are all for that—real border security that makes a difference. We should strive to reach a deal as soon as is humanly possible.

If we are not able to reach a global deal by this Friday on these many issues, there will be a temptation to do a short-term funding bill with some of these items but not others. That won't work. We should be doing all of these things together instead of in a piecemeal, week-by-week fashion. Our Republican friends cannot pick and choose what they want and do what they did on the tax bill and do what they did on the healthcare bill in saying that Democrats are not welcome to be part of the deal—because this one ain't under reconciliation.

We want to work in a bipartisan way, but a bipartisan way means just that, not Republicans deciding on their own and telling us that we should just be for it. The best way to get a good, bipartisan result, which by the Senate rules is necessary for spending bills, is for us to work together.

TAX CUTS AND JOBS BILL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I will have further comments on the tax bill that I will deliver on the Senate floor late tonight after the conference report, but I just want to say that this bill will be an anchor around the ankles of every Republican. It so helps the wealthy and the powerful corporations, and it does so little and even hurts many in the middle class. It is a loser.

In a CNN new poll, a majority of Americans oppose the tax bill. When did you ever hear that Americans are against a tax cut bill? Well, you are hearing it now.

It is because our Republican friends are listening to the thousands of really greedy multibillionaires who want their taxes cut, even though they are doing great, and don't want to share those benefits with the middle class even if they make millions of middle-class people pay more.

The Republicans will rue the day that they passed this tax bill—will rue the day—because it is so unfair to the middle class. It so blows a hole in our deficit. It so threatens Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. They will rue the day.

SPECIAL COUNSEL MUELLER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, we have a lot of business to get to this week, but because the topic is so important, I would like to address Special Counsel Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in our elections and the Trump campaign's potential involvement.

Over the past several months, the investigation and the FBI have been the target of a smear campaign by Republicans, in the media primarily—in a media outlet that is hardly regarded as down the middle, in a media outlet that just seems to ask "how high" when President Trump says to jump.

Now it has been joined, quite naturally, by several Republicans here in Congress. Their intent is not to push back on the special counsel's findings or to introduce exculpatory evidence on behalf of Manafort, Gates, Papadopoulos, or Flynn, who have been indicted or convicted. Their intent is not to make an argument about the substance of the investigation at all. Their intent is to discredit the investigator and the investigation itself, by falsely painting it as biased or partisan. That way, whatever its findings are at the end of the day, they have created a permission structure to dismiss them.

When you are afraid of the result, you attack the process. When you are afraid of the message, you shoot the messenger. That is what is happening right now with the escalating rhetoric in the rightwing echo media chambers. The commentators at FOX News have actually called Mr. Mueller's investigation a coup—an outrageous charge that has been repeated by a Republican Congressman on the floor of the House. That is how overblown this rhetoric has gotten.

Mr. Mueller is one of the most trusted and respected public servants in America. He has served administrations of both parties. He was first appointed by a Republican and was installed as a special counsel by President Trump's pick for Deputy Attorney General, Republican Rod Rosenstein. As everyone in America knows, he is as straight a shooter as one comes. Impugning his motives and calling his investigation a witch hunt or a coup is, frankly, hysterical.

I regret even repeating those ridiculous comments because there is not a shred of evidence to back them up—not a shred. If any of these critics had evidence, they would pursue their claims in court, but, of course, there is no evidence. So, instead, they wage a warped campaign in the press, fueled by an avalanche of trumped-up allegations and disinformation.

What are they so afraid of?

We all know why. The special counsel's investigation is an important one for our democracy. We have to get to the bottom of what happened in last year's election no matter who ends up on the short end of the stick when those results are announced: How was