

facto consenting to the President's capitulation in Helsinki. They cannot stand by. The American people will not allow it.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, finally, on healthcare, ever since Republicans have been handed the keys to both Houses of Congress and the White House after the 2016 election, they have engaged in a protracted campaign of sabotage against our healthcare system. Premiums are going up, coverage is going down, and it is all falling in the laps of our Republican colleagues in the House and Senate.

President Trump and congressional Republicans proposed legislation that would have gutted Medicaid and allowed insurers to charge more and deny coverage just because a person had gotten sick. The legislation would have excluded critical benefits and imposed lifetime or annual limits on care.

Under cover of night, the Republicans dismantled the healthcare law's coverage requirement without putting anything in its place.

The Trump administration canceled the Federal program that helped low-income customers afford insurance and expanded the availability of junk insurance plans that sucker Americans in with low premiums but that hardly cover anything. When people have these plans, they ask: Why did I even buy insurance? They were duped.

Now, worse yet, the administration has directed the Justice Department to stop defending the constitutionality of protections for Americans with preexisting medical conditions—turning its back on the most popular and humane advancement in our healthcare system over the last decade.

I would say to my Republican friends: Go to your constituents. Ask if people have someone who is sick in their families. You will get a lot of hands. Then ask them if they should be excluded from gaining health insurance to help that sick member and see how many support these ideas.

If they try to do this in the dark of night, it is not going to work. In August, we Democrats are going to be talking about this over and over again. Believe me—this will probably be the most important factor in the 2018 election as the American people will rebel from the taking away of healthcare.

Imagine going back to the days when a mother with a child who has cancer can no longer find affordable healthcare for her daughter. When hard-working Americans who fall on hard times are made to suffer by being denied healthcare coverage precisely because they need it, how wrong, how backward, how immoral. That is where President Trump wants to take us, and that is where all of our Republican colleagues seem to be following.

Later this morning—actually, right now—a group of Democrats is announcing how we plan to fight back against

this lawsuit and preserve the protections for up to 130 million nonelderly Americans who have preexisting conditions. The elderly, fortunately, are protected since we still have Medicare, despite some efforts by some on the other side to cut it back.

As millions of Americans watch their healthcare costs go up, as they read the news about the latest Republican effort to undo healthcare protections, they fear for the future and wonder who in Washington will be fighting for them. In November, they will have the chance to vote for a party that will check the President's dangerous healthcare sabotage, that will work to bring down costs and improve quality, that will never undermine the protections of Americans with preexisting conditions.

I look forward to the response to my colleagues' announcement.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Ryan Wesley Bounds, of Oregon, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from Arkansas.

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT
Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I wish to take this opportunity to express my support for the 20,000 men and women of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. They work hard every day to keep drugs off our streets, to stop human trafficking, to protect our communities from gang violence, and, yes, to enforce our immigration laws. Theirs can be a thankless job, but they do it with courage, dedication, and professionalism. So I, for one, want to say thank you.

I wish to point out the overwhelming support that House Republicans showed for ICE yesterday, which stands in stark contrast to the contemptible display put on by House Democrats. On a simple resolution merely expressing support for the men and women of ICE, only 18 Democrats voted yes, 8 skipped the vote, 34 voted no, and 133 Democrats voted present, which is the same thing as no. That is a pretty sad state of affairs. Thirty-four Democrats condemned the men and women of ICE, and 141 Democrats don't even have the courage of their conviction—they don't

even have the guts to vote yes or no—because we all know that Democrats, in their heart of hearts, want to abolish ICE. The way they tell it, ICE is a rogue agency driven by hatred and spite to tear apart communities.

Congressman POCAN of Wisconsin said that ICE is "ripping at the moral fabric of our nation."

Congresswoman JAYAPAL of Washington said that "ICE is out of control."

Congressman BLUMENAUER of Oregon calls ICE "toxic."

The senior Senator from Massachusetts said that we should replace ICE "with something that reflects our values," which I suppose means that the 20,000 men and women of ICE don't measure up to the professor's definition of our values. I have to ask, isn't the rule of law one of those values? Because ICE's job is simply to enforce the law and to protect our citizens from crime.

In the last year alone, ICE arrested more than 125,000 illegal aliens with criminal records. Those illegal aliens were responsible for more than 80,000 DUIs, 76,000 dangerous drug offenses, 48,000 assaults, 11,000 weapon offenses, 5,000 sexual assaults, 2,000 kidnappings, and 1,800 homicides. Yes, that is right, almost 2,000 souls would still be on this Earth but for those illegal alien criminals. ICE's investigative arm seized more than 980,000 pounds of narcotics last year. These men and women are on the frontlines of the war on drugs and the opioid crisis in particular. Do the Democrats really believe we should put all these efforts on hold?

This call to abolish ICE is so irresponsible that even some Democrats—those not running for President or beholden to the radical left—are speaking out against this.

Jeh Johnson, President Obama's former Secretary of Homeland Security, said that it "is not a serious policy proposal" and "would compromise public safety." He pointed out that even those who opposed the Vietnam war wouldn't have demanded that we abolish the Department of Defense.

Eric Holder, President Obama's former Attorney General, said, "I don't think that substantively or politically that makes a great deal of sense," calling it "a gift to Republicans."

Sarah Saldana, who ran ICE under President Obama, has called it "nonsensical."

Perhaps the most insightful comment came from former Senator Joe Lieberman of Connecticut. He said, "This makes no sense unless you no longer want any rules on immigration or customs to be enforced." And that, I would contend, is the whole point.

Those who want to abolish ICE just want open borders. The very bill House Democrats have introduced to abolish ICE doesn't even say which Federal agency should assume its critical law enforcement duties. They leave it up to a commission. The reason, I submit, is that they don't really care. Their obsession with open borders is so great

that they are willing to risk public safety to achieve it. These irresponsible politicians should know better. They aren't worthy to lead the brave, hard-working men and women of ICE. These officers are just trying to do their jobs and to keep us safe. On behalf of a grateful nation, I conclude by again extending them my deepest thanks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I join the Senator from Arkansas in commending those who are involved in law enforcement, risking their lives for the safety of this Nation at all levels—Federal, State, and local. They put their badges on every single day and risk their lives for us, and that is a fact.

Within the Department of Homeland Security, there are men and women who are conscientiously trying to keep America safe. I commend them as well. I believe they are doing their job as they understand it, and they are risking their lives many times to achieve it, not only to stop the illegal flow of drugs into our country but to deter crime and to ferret out criminals where possible. They risk their lives to achieve that goal.

I have not joined in a call for the abolition of ICE, but I will not join in a call for the adoration of ICE because of one specific issue. The zero tolerance policy of the Trump administration resulted in our agents of the Department of Homeland Security forcibly separating children from their parents—forcibly separating up to 3,000 children from their parents.

I saw some of those kids separated by that agency. They were toddlers and infants. Some were being held by the care workers whom I happened to visit in Chicago. They were little babies taken from their mothers—toddlers, children 5 and 6 years old, separated by this agency under the President's zero tolerance policy. There were up to 3,000 of them, according to the administration's own estimates.

Had that happened before? Only rarely, but it became the policy of this administration until there was such an uproar in the United States and around the world that President Trump reversed his position on zero tolerance.

Reversing the position did not return the children to their parents. It took Federal courts to do that—one in particular, in San Diego, where the judge called the representatives of ICE, Health and Human Services, and all the other agencies involved in these children being removed forcibly from their parents and gave them deadlines to return the children to their parents. It was then that we discovered something about this agency. It was then that we discovered that they didn't keep a record of the parents and kids.

If you place an order online to Amazon or some other source and the next day you want to check on the status of your order, you use your tracking

number, and they will tell you where your package is. There was no tracking number when it came to these kids. If you decide that you are going to order a pizza and it seems to take a little too long and you call the pizza parlor, they can generally tell you where the delivery person is. The same thing is true in so many other areas.

Why, then, did this agency, which my colleagues are now coming to the floor claiming such great praise for, ignore the obvious? This agency, the Department of Homeland Security, ended up setting free 3,000 children into care facilities around the United States of America and didn't keep records of the parents.

We asked them several weeks ago, downstairs—all of the agencies, including ICE, referred to by the Senator from Arkansas: OK, let's get down to basics. How many kids are we talking about?

They wouldn't give us a number.

How many kids are under the age of 5? Those are the ones whom you have a deadline to reunite under the Federal court order in San Diego.

They couldn't give us a number.

Then, how many parents can you identify who actually had their kids taken away?

ICE said: We can identify 10.

Ten parents, 3,000 kids—I am not making this up. This is exactly what they said.

They said: We have 10 parents in custody. Those are the ones we can identify.

Two weeks passed, and we had another briefing this week. The numbers are now more complete. There are some 2,500 kids separated from their parents, spread around the United States.

What happened to the parents who lost their children?

The explanation from ICE was that they abandoned their kids and left.

Does that sound reasonable? Does that sound honest? You take the child away from the arms of a parent and then the parent says: I am leaving the country.

That might have happened in some cases, for reasons I don't know, but it is an outrageous suggestion. What it reflects is incompetency. How in the world can you take a child away from a parent, forcibly take them away, and not keep an adequate record for their reunification? How can you do that? Common sense and common decency suggests that you would do it.

I am not going to join in any resolution applauding that action by any Federal agency—the Department of Homeland Security, ICE, or other agencies. To me, it is a stain on the reputation of this Nation, one that we need to quickly resolve by reuniting these children with their families as quickly as possible.

You see, it isn't just a question of a holiday for these kids. Pediatricians have come forward from the American Academy of Pediatrics and have said

that what we have done is institutional abuse of children.

This separation is not just another day in the life of this 2-year-old, 5-year-old, or 8-year-old. This separation is something that is causing trauma within their own minds.

Have you read the stories about the reunifications, where some of the parents come back, finally get their children, and the children will not even come to the parents? They don't quite understand what just happened to them. They think the parent might have just decided to give them up.

There they were alone and by themselves at that tender age. Can you imagine that for your children or your grandchildren? I can't.

We did it as part of the official government policy of the Trump administration under zero tolerance.

When some of us come to the floor to question the actions, the conduct, the management of ICE, we have good reason to do it. I hope for the people within that agency who are doing their jobs conscientiously that we can at least be honest in saying that this policy is one which doesn't deserve praise and doesn't deserve our adoration on the floor of the Senate or the House.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

S. RES. 582

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I rise to speak about a matter of extraordinary importance to the future of American democracy and, in fact, democracies all over the world. At the Helsinki summit on Monday, President Trump embarrassed our country, undermined American values, and openly sided with Russia's authoritarian leader, Vladimir Putin, against the U.S. intelligence community's unanimous assessment that Russia interfered in the 2016 Presidential election.

Senator JOHN MCCAIN is right when he said: It was—

[It was] one of the most disgraceful performances by an American president in memory. The damage inflicted by President Trump's naivete, egotism, false equivalence, and sympathy for autocrats is difficult to calculate. But it is clear that the summit in Helsinki was a tragic mistake.

That is not BERNIE SANDERS talking. That is former Republican Presidential candidate Senator JOHN MCCAIN.

On Tuesday, after a strong international backlash, Trump, in a bizarre statement, claimed he misspoke and, of course, blamed the media for reporting what he said, even then he could not help but suggest that the electoral interference "could be other people also" and not just Russia.

In an interview last night, Trump changed his answer yet again and acknowledged, in the meekest way possible, that, yes, Russia meddled in our election, and, as the leader of Russia, Vladimir Putin is responsible.

This is a step forward, but it is not remotely sufficient. Who knows what tweet the President will release tomorrow? He seems to come up with a new response every few hours.