

This abdication of our power and responsibility is nothing more than weakness in the face of partisanship. This is truly tribal. What tribe do you belong to? Do you belong to the Democratic tribe, or do you belong to the Republican tribe? I am sorry, I belong to the American tribe, and I am going to stay right in the tribe I belong to, and I am going to be loyal to the American tribe.

This abdication of our power and responsibility is truly, truly a weakness in the face of partisanship, and my colleagues need to stand up to the leaders. We have given too much power to the leadership here.

I remember the day when people used to talk about, oh, the committee chairman had so much power. They could run a bill and make sure it got on the floor and got voted on. Those days are gone. There is always a reason why something doesn't go to the floor, even if it goes through the committee process. Something comes out of the committee unanimously, and it still doesn't come to the floor. Try to explain that one.

To protect the powers of the Senators as representatives for their States and to protect the institution of the Senate, that is not that hard, and I know because I have done it. I have voted against my colleagues on my side of the aisle. I was up front, and I was honest. I said: I am sorry; I can't go home and explain that. It doesn't make sense at all, and I am not voting for it.

If they want to get my vote, they are going to have to sit down and say: What would it take to get your vote?

And I would explain to them: You have to adjust this or adjust this and make sense.

It is fair to the minority, and if we were in the majority, or vice versa, the majority should be fair to us. If you can work through that, you can make it. You can make it on this side. If not, it is going to be a miserable 6 years for every Senator who just got elected, if we don't come back to reality.

I know I keep calling it an individual right, but it really isn't. It is a trust passed down from the Senators who preceded us. They had the will and they had the determination to make this place work, and we have given up on that. This belongs to our constituents, the power we have here, and we have no power to protect them now.

The solution to obstruction isn't ruining the Senate. It is outreach. It is compromise. It is finding solutions that make a bunch of people on the far left and the far right very uncomfortable and mad sometimes. Until we are willing to do that, the hard work of this institution is going to get worse. So it is not that we are fractured, we are almost broken, and it was never intended. I have never seen anything broken that we couldn't fix. I hope we come to our senses. I hope we act as Americans. I hope we understand basically the whole thought process from our Founding Fathers, who had the

great insight of having two bodies in a bicameral, not a unicameral, branch that was supposed to work to help each other and protect us from ourselves. Right now, we have become the worst enemy of ourselves. I hope we change.

Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The Senator from Michigan.

HEALTHCARE

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I have come to the floor many times, and I come to the floor today to say something straightforward. Healthcare is personal, not political. Despite all the debates, everything that has gone on around healthcare, for every family in Michigan and across the country and for every one of us, healthcare is personal, not political.

If your child gets sick in the middle of the night and needs to be taken to the emergency room, you don't care who the doctor voted for in the last Presidential election.

If you are diagnosed with cancer or a chronic condition, you are more interested in receiving the care you need than the ins and outs of the insurance plan that provides that care.

If your mom or dad needs to move into a nursing home, you want to make sure they are happy and that they are treated well, regardless of the specific Medicaid reimbursement rate.

Healthcare is personal to each and every one of us, not political, and it affects each and every one of us, whether we watch MSNBC, CNN, FOX News, or don't turn on the television.

That is why, when this administration and Republicans in Congress try to take away people's healthcare over and over and over again, I take it personally. You know who else takes it personally? The American people. Certainly, I know the people of Michigan do.

Back in November, they sent a message at the ballot box. Unfortunately, the administration and Republicans in Congress missed the message. They could be working across the aisle right now to expand access to care and improve quality and reduce costs. This is something I work to do all the time. Instead, they are, once again, trying to take away your healthcare.

If you don't believe me, just take a look at President Trump's budget. This administration wants to pay for a huge tax giveaway for the wealthiest among us by taking away people's healthcare.

Let me say that again.

They are asking us to pay for a budget-busting tax giveaway for the wealthy by taking healthcare away from people who depend on Medicare and Medicaid. Many of us, when this

tax bill passed, said that when they were creating almost \$2 trillion in deficit, watch out because the next thing will be a discussion to say: Oh. Oh my gosh. We have a big deficit. We have to cut Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, and the other things that directly affect people, with healthcare at the top of the list.

So what happens? Well, the Trump budget would cut \$800 billion from Medicare over the next 10 years. That is taking away healthcare from our seniors, people with disabilities. The Trump budget would cut \$1.5 trillion from Medicaid over the next 10 years. That is taking healthcare away from half of all the babies born in America who are covered by Medicaid—them and their moms. That is taking healthcare away from two in three seniors who get their nursing home care from Medicaid healthcare. That is taking away healthcare from everyone who has benefited from expanding Medicaid, including low-income, minimum-wage working people, working families, including more than 650,000 people in my State of Michigan covered by a very successful program called Healthy Michigan.

Ninety-seven percent of Michigan children can see a doctor when they get sick or hurt now because of what has happened with Michigan, with Healthy Michigan and other coverage, and the number of people treated without insurance has dropped 50 percent, which means instead of folks dropping into the emergency room who can't pay and everybody else's insurance rates go up to pay for it, people now have their own insurance, and those costs have dropped by 50 percent—the number of people walking in without insurance.

What has that meant for the State of Michigan? Taxpayers had more than \$400 million back into the budget in the State of Michigan last year because of the savings because of Healthy Michigan.

We should be building on this progress. Instead, Republicans are, once again, trying to take your healthcare away.

Between 2010 and 2018, the Republican majority in Congress voted to repeal or weaken the Affordable Care Act more than 70 times—70—with no replacement. Now the Trump administration has stepped in to help because they weren't successful in Congress. We were able to stop that because people rose up and said: My healthcare is personal not political. People from across the country engaged and we were able to stop it in Congress. So now the Trump administration has stepped in to do a number of things to sabotage the Affordable Care Act.

Look at what has happened in the last year. Last February, the Trump administration announced it would provide funding to States that want to let insurance plans cover fewer services, encouraging fewer services to be covered.

Last April, they issued a rule that, among other things, allowed insurers

to hike premiums 15 percent without justification.

In June and August, they expanded access to Association Health Plans and what are called short-term plans, which we also call junk health plans because they are a lot cheaper, but they don't cover much, and people don't realize that until they get sick. These plans don't have to cover prescription drugs or mental health or maternity care.

By the way, as the person who led that fight in the Senate Finance Committee, I can tell you that the vast majority of insurance plans prior to the Affordable Care Act did not cover maternity care and prenatal care, which is pretty basic as part of healthcare for women. Remember when being a woman was considered a preexisting condition? That is what we meant. These plans are bringing that back, which means if you are a woman, you have to pay more to be able to get basic healthcare, and that is wrong. We did away with that 10 years ago.

In July, the Trump administration slashed funding for programs that help people enroll in health insurance coverage and began steering people toward the junk plans. So instead of giving people information through healthcare.gov and encouraging people to find out what would be the cheapest plan that would be effective and cover what they need, they made it harder to sign up for comprehensive coverage and pushed people toward these junk plans.

In October, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced that healthcare.gov would be shut down for 60 hours during open enrollment season for “maintenance,” so you couldn’t even get online to be able to sign up for more affordable, comprehensive insurance that actually would cover things you and your family need.

In November, the Trump administration released information for States on how they could use waivers to undermine consumer protections. Consumer protections are things like not getting dropped if you get sick. Prior to the Affordable Care Act, so many times people said to me: I have paid for insurance all my life and never needed it. I finally need it, and I got dropped after I got sick. What do you mean it only covers 1 day in the hospital or doesn’t cover maternity care? What do you mean the insurance company can cap the number of cancer treatments I need? Isn’t that up to my doctor?

Well, it is now, and it has been under the Affordable Care Act. Instead, we are in a situation where they are trying to get States to waive consumer protections and put decisions back in the hands of insurance companies.

Thanks to all of this sabotage, it is estimated that comprehensive health insurance costs 16.6 percent more this year than it otherwise would.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to complete my statement, which will be about 2 minutes.

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

Ms. STABENOW. Thank you very much.

It is estimated that comprehensive health insurance costs 16.6 percent more this year than it otherwise would because of all of this sabotage, upheaval, and chaos in the healthcare markets.

In case those sabotage attempts were too subtle, last week the Department of Justice announced that it agrees—the Trump administration now agrees with the Federal judge in Texas who said that the entire Affordable Care Act must be struck down. There would be no more coverage for preexisting conditions, no more consumer protections, no more capacity to have your child on your insurance until age 26, no more capacity to be able to expand what we are doing for minimum wage workers, et cetera.

In other words, if they can’t take away your health insurance through the legislative process, they are trying to do it now through the courts, which also goes to what is happening now in terms of changing the rules so they can more quickly put judges through and pack the courts with folks who will agree with taking away people’s healthcare.

What is the Republican alternative to the ACA? Unfortunately, these folks still don’t have one. Don’t worry. President Trump now says that he is going to have a “really great” healthcare plan after he is reelected in 2020. Just wait.

By the way, to emphasize the fact that Senate Republicans support what President Trump is doing, they passed a budget resolution out of committee last week through a partisan vote—only Republican votes—that includes repeal of the Affordable Care Act with no replacement in place.

In the meantime, the Affordable Care Act could be struck down by the courts, and more than 20 million people who gained health coverage through the Affordable Care Act could be out of luck.

Let me say, in conclusion, that just this week I heard from one of those 20 million people. Lisa from Norton Shores graduated with a marketing degree in the middle of a recession and worked a low-wage job at the local hospital for 8 years. When a part-time, temporary job opened up at a local marketing agency, the Affordable Care Act allowed Lisa to take the job and get the experience she needed for a career in her field. She was able to get healthcare separately from her job. That job led to another marketing job with a local company—this one with benefits.

A few years later, the original marketing agency offered Lisa a full-time job. Once again, the ACA allowed her to take it. Lisa wrote this:

It was only through the Affordable Care Act that I have been able to pull myself up to be a contributing member of society. It has allowed me to rise to my capabilities.

She added that if the ACA is overturned, “I will have to leave this job

for a position that includes health insurance. It would kill this awesome small business I work for. . . . This will be a top priority for me when I vote in 2020.”

Lisa and millions of other people are sending a message. The only question is, Are folks listening?

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

KESSLER NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Kessler nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

CLOTURE MOTION

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Roy Kalman Altman, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

Mitch McConnell, Johnny Isakson, Roger F. Wicker, Chuck Grassley, John Boozman, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Shelley Moore Capito, Pat Roberts, Roy Blunt, Deb Fischer, David Perdue, Todd Young, John Thune, Rick Scott, Mike Rounds, Marco Rubio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call is waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Roy Kalman Altman, of Florida, to be the United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 66, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 60 Ex.]

YEAS—66

Alexander	Burr	Cortez Masto
Barrasso	Capito	Cotton
Blackburn	Cardin	Cramer
Blunt	Cassidy	Crapo
Boozman	Collins	Cruz
Braun	Cornyn	Daines