

There are many questions for the President, but here are two. Why do we need more troops in the Iran area right now? Why? And why such a large number—120,000, which is as many as the total number of troops we have had in Iraq at significant times.

PUERTO RICO

Now, there are a lot of Americans still waiting at this point for Puerto Rico and the disaster bill. A lot of Americans are still waiting for the Senate to put politics aside and help them piece their lives back together from natural disasters last year, from wildfires to floods, from tornadoes to hurricanes. Because of climate change, our weather is different—considerably different—and Americans are paying the price. We are also paying the price for not taking leadership on climate. But now I am here to discuss this relief package. Throughout our discussions here in Congress about the relief package, Democrats have maintained that it must include relief for all Americans affected by disasters last year, not just those Americans who live in the West and Midwest or South, but also the 3 million citizens living in Puerto Rico. It is not a zero-sum game. It is not that if you help Puerto Rico you would not be helping Florida or Iowa. You can help them all, and that is what Americans have always done.

But there is some good news. I must say that I am encouraged that Republicans are starting to realize that we cannot leave Puerto Rico out. It may not have happened had Democrats not insisted all along that Puerto Rico be included, but our Republican friends are beginning to realize that if Puerto Rico is not in the package, no package will pass. As for their intransigence and obeisance to President Trump, when he came in out of the clear blue one day and bollixed up the package that had been carefully worked out between the Democrats and Republicans by insisting that no aid to Puerto Rico be in the package, it is clear to our Republican friends that is not working, and I am encouraged that Republicans have moved into our direction when it comes to disaster in Puerto Rico. I hope that we can find agreement soon and put this totally unnecessary political fight behind us and finally deliver relief to disaster-stricken Americans wherever they may be.

HEALTHCARE

Madam President, 133 million Americans under 65 years of age are living with a preexisting condition of some kind. Right now, because of the laws on the books, insurance companies cannot charge those Americans more or deny them coverage simply because they have a preexisting condition. That is a great thing. That is something Americans longed for before these protections became law.

But, unfortunately, that could all change and go away if the lawsuit against our healthcare law brought by Republican attorneys general and supported by the Trump administration

succeeds. It would deprive health coverage for tens of millions of Americans and risk denial of coverage or exorbitant premiums for up to 133 million Americans with preexisting conditions. That scale of cruelty is so large that it is almost unimaginable—to tell 133 million Americans that you will not get protections if, God forbid, you have an illness and your insurance company wants to cut you off. Yet those are the practical consequences of the lawsuit that the Trump Department of Justice continues to support. While that lawsuit is a fundamental threat to our country's healthcare system, led by President Trump and supported by just about every Republican in this Chamber, the Trump administration has also spent much of the past 2 years sabotaging and undermining healthcare at every turn.

As for this ideology that the government should not help people who have healthcare problems, well, about 90 percent of all Americans do not agree with that, but somehow it is dominant in the White House and dominant in the Republican Senate. Last week the House passed legislation that would reverse the Trump administration. It is good that the new majority in the House is taking action.

Later this week the House is poised to pass another package of legislation to further protect preexisting conditions and help Americans sign up for quality health coverage. But so far none of the bills that protect Americans' healthcare have received any attention from the Republican leader, Senator McCONNELL, and that is a shame—a real shame.

Leader McCONNELL has slowly but surely been turning the Senate into a legislative graveyard, where even the most consequential and noncontroversial legislation gets buried indefinitely.

Just take the House-passed legislation on preexisting conditions as an example. This is extraordinarily popular with the American people. A Kaiser poll found that nearly 70 percent of Americans do not want the courts to overturn protections for preexisting conditions. I don't think any of my colleagues would argue on the merits that we should go back to a healthcare system where insurance companies could discriminate against a child with cancer. In fact, several of my Republican colleagues who recently won reelection ran ads explicitly saying they were for protections for Americans with preexisting conditions. So why will the Republican leader not commit to at least putting up legislation to do that?

I hope it is not because my Republican colleagues want to be able to say one thing and do another. I hope it is not because of the influence of dark money. I hope that is not why. So I would say to the leader: Do not throw healthcare legislation into the legislative graveyard. Do not throw the healthcare of the American people into the legislative graveyard.

The American people are worried about rising costs and declining qual-

ity. They are worried that if they are sick, they could wake up any day and no longer have access to healthcare. That is a very real threat that millions of Americans face under the Trump administration. Healthcare was the No. 1 issue for most Americans in the last election. We should be doing something to protect American families from the Trump administration's effort to undermine healthcare. I understand that my Republican colleagues do not want to cross the President, but this issue is too important to too many American families to remain silent, too important for our Republican colleagues not to go to their leader—especially, those colleagues who campaigned for preexisting condition protections—and tell the leader that we must bring this legislation to the floor.

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

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

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

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, when Republicans took office at the beginning of the 115th Congress, we had one goal in mind, and that was to make life better for American families. We knew that American families were struggling. Recovery from the great recession was long and slow. Economic growth was sluggish. Wages were stagnant. Too many families were living paycheck to paycheck. American families needed relief, and Republicans were determined to give it to them.

That is why we made getting our economy going again a priority. We knew that our economy needed to do a lot better if American families were going to start doing better. A strong economy is the key to getting Americans access to the jobs, wages, and opportunities they need to thrive.

So we took action. We eliminated burdensome regulations that were acting as a drag on economic growth, and we passed a historic reform of our Tax Code to put more money in Americans' pockets and to get our economy going again.

We cut tax rates and doubled the child tax credit, and in 2018 the average family of four saw a tax cut of more than \$2,000. We lowered tax rates for businesses, expanded business owners' ability to invest in their operations and their workers and made American businesses more competitive in the global economy.

We are seeing the results. Job creation is up. Wages are growing at the fastest pace in a decade. Personal income is up. Unemployment is at the lowest level in 50 years. Tax reform is

delivering bigger paychecks, more opportunities, and a better quality of life for American workers.

Tax reform might be our biggest achievement in the 115th Congress, but it is far from the only thing that we did to make life better for American families. We also enacted legislation to provide better education and training to American workers. We passed multi-billion-dollar bipartisan legislation to combat the opioid epidemic, which has devastated families and communities across the United States.

We passed the longest extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program in the program's history. We passed legislation to provide hope to terminally ill patients by giving them access to experimental treatments. We passed bipartisan clean energy legislation. We passed a farm bill to support our Nation's farmers and ranchers, to protect our environment, and more.

But there is more work to be done. Republicans are working right now to develop and pass legislation to continue to address the cost of living and to improve Americans' quality of life. We are committed to making tax relief permanent for American families. We are also committed to ensure that the economic progress we have made sticks around for the long term.

We are working to open new markets for American goods and services so that American workers and businesses can thrive. One priority is passing the United States-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement, which would grow our economy and create 167,000 new jobs.

Republicans are also committed to making healthcare more affordable. We want to give Americans more and more affordable insurance options. We are working on legislation to reduce the cost of prescription drugs and increase access to lower cost generics. We are focused on developing solutions that will bring greater clarity to healthcare costs and address so-called surprise billing. You should not go to an in-network hospital expecting to pay one thing and then get an unexpected enormous bill weeks later because it wasn't disclosed to you that the doctor you saw wasn't in your insurance network.

Another challenge facing American families is the cost of education. Republicans are currently working on legislation to make it easier to apply for Federal student aid and to pay back student loans. We will also continue to support career and technical education, and we will work to further increase the usefulness of 529 savings plans to help families plan and meet educational expenses.

One bright spot for family budgets over the past few years has been energy costs. Republican policies have helped to make energy more affordable, and we are committed to keeping American's energy bills reasonable by supporting responsible energy development.

We are also committed to continuing our work to keep our air clean and our environment healthy.

We currently have multiple bills in the pipeline to promote clean energy technologies with more to come. There are a lot of other Republican plans that I could talk about, everything from making it easier for small businesses to offer retirement plans to ensuring that rural communities enjoy equal access to broadband services and the economic opportunities that they bring.

One thing the American people can count on is that Republicans are working every day to improve Americans' quality of life. Our proposals may not always make it into the news. A lot of them do not have catchy names, like the Green New Deal, and they do not make pie-in-the-sky promises. But unlike the so-called Green New Deal, our plans are actually achievable, and they would actually make life better for American families.

I am proud that more families are thriving today thanks to tax reform and to other Republican policies, and Republicans will continue to work every day to make sure that life continues to improve for the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time has expired.

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

Mr. THUNE. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) and the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 108 Ex.]

YEAS—49

Alexander	Daines	Lee
Barrasso	Enzi	McConnell
Blackburn	Ernst	McSally
Blunt	Fischer	Moran
Boozman	Gardner	Murkowski
Braun	Graham	Paul
Burr	Grassley	Perdue
Capito	Hawley	Portman
Collins	Hoeven	Risch
Cornyn	Hyde-Smith	Roberts
Cotton	Inhofe	Rubio
Cramer	Isakson	Sasse
Crapo	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cruz	Lankford	Scott (SC)

Shelby
Sullivan
Thune

Tillis
Toomey
Wicker

Young

NAYS—46

Baldwin	Heinrich	Sanders
Bennet	Jones	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kaine	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Brown	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cantwell	Leahy	Smith
Cardin	Manchin	Stabenow
Carper	Markey	Tester
Casey	Menendez	Udall
Coons	Merkley	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murphy	Warner
Duckworth	Murray	Warren
Durbin	Peters	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Reed	Wyden
Harris	Romney	
Hassan	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—5

Cassidy	Hirono	Rounds
Gillibrand	Kennedy	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 Kenneth Kiyul Lee, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, John Hoeven, Chuck Grassley, James E. Risch, Johnny Isakson, John Barrasso, Steve Daines, David Perdue, Roger F. Wicker, Jerry Moran, John Cornyn, John Thune, Richard Burr, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, Lindsey Graham, Shelley Moore Capito.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Kenneth Kiyul Lee, of California, to be United States Circuit Court Judge, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) and the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO), are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 45, as follows: