

called Medicare for All, the government would take away Americans' insurance choices and force everyone into a single one-size-fits-all, government-run plan and then tax Americans to pay for it.

Thanks to policies like tax reform, American families are doing better than they have been doing in a long time. They have been taking home more money. They have access to better jobs and more opportunities, and they are enjoying better wages and benefits. To most people, it would seem logical to continue and build on the policies that have gotten us here, but not to Democrats. Democrats want to overturn the policies that have gotten us to this point. Instead of tax cuts, they want tax hikes so they can implement their socialist fantasies. Instead of less government interference in Americans' lives, they want more. They think the government should be directing your healthcare choices, your housing choices, your energy choices, and much more. It is unfortunate that the Democratic Party is being swallowed by its extreme left wing.

Republicans are going to do everything we can to protect Americans from Democrats' socialist fantasies and to continue to expand the choices and the opportunities available to American families.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 (Mr. ROMNEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, next Saturday, June 1, marks the official start of the Atlantic hurricane season. It is an important reminder for everyone—from individuals and families to businesses and local officials—to review preparedness efforts to ensure you are ready for anything that Mother Nature may throw at you.

There are simple steps, of course, that everybody can take, like reviewing evacuation routes, signing up for emergency alerts, and making a family communications plan. This is also a great time to look at your insurance policies to ensure that you have the right coverage. This isn't the most fun conversation or topic to talk about at the dinner table, but in the event of a disaster, these small steps can make a world of difference.

As we gear up for the 2019 Atlantic hurricane season, I can't help but think back on the devastation my State saw in 2017 when Hurricane Harvey hit. This storm was the largest rain event in American history, and some parts of Texas are still in the recovery mode. Harvey brought more than 50 inches of rain to some parts of Houston.

I am sure that many Americans can remember the TV footage of the devastating scenes and the heroism of people who rose to the challenge and helped. The roofs of homes were completely torn off and revealed knee-deep water and scattered furniture. Streets looked like rivers that were filled with small boats that led rescue operations. Folks linked arms and made human chains to help save people who were stranded in their vehicles.

It was the second most expensive hurricane in history, only behind Hurricane Katrina, with an estimated total cost of \$125 billion. While we can put a pricetag on the damaged homes, businesses, and infrastructure, there is no way we could even begin to quantify the impact this storm had on lost loved ones and how much it completely upended so many lives.

With that heartbreak fresh on our minds, it only underscores the importance of strengthening our preparedness efforts. Unlike many threats we face, either from our adversaries on the ground or in cyberspace, there is nothing we can do to stop Mother Nature in her tracks. Our only course of action is to be prepared and to build resilient communities that can withstand the impact. We need to continue to do everything in our power to provide assistance to State and local governments so they can protect themselves in the event of severe weather.

One may recall, in the wake of Hurricane Harvey and other natural disasters, that Congress worked hard to provide disaster relief to Texas and other States that were adversely affected. While there is still a lot of work to be done, these dollars have helped my State to rebuild and to bring back some semblance of normalcy. I am grateful to all of our colleagues here for working with us, as well as with Florida, California, Puerto Rico, and the other places that were hit at about that same time. I am grateful for the assistance of a bipartisan group of Senators and Congressmen and for President Trump who worked together to provide disaster relief in the wake of this devastation. Yet here is the rub—much of the funding that has been approved for Texas still hasn't been untangled from the redtape here in Washington, DC.

In February 2018—15 months ago—Congress appropriated more than \$28 billion in community development block grants for disaster recovery, with roughly \$12 billion intended specifically for mitigation purposes. About \$4 billion of that was designated for Texas, and it could still be used to do things, like to repair wastewater treatment facilities that haven't been fully restored, to carry out important economic revitalization in decimated areas, or to relocate or elevate damaged facilities in order to prepare for the next storm. Yet we have not seen a cent of that \$4 billion because it has been tied up at the Office of Management and Budget.

I have said before and will say it again: I look at the Constitution. I see what the President's authority is. I see what the House of Representatives' authority is. I see what the U.S. Senate's authority is. My understanding is, when they all agree on an appropriations bill, that it is the law of the land. Yet somehow, this Agency—the Office of Management and Budget—has seen fit to usurp that authority and to defeat the will of Congress when it comes to getting disaster relief to the intended beneficiaries.

This undue delay, I believe, is unacceptable but is, sadly, not unique to my State. Other States are facing this same unnecessary holdup in getting desperately needed funds. One of those States is West Virginia, which has been waiting more than 3 years to receive funding after the devastating floods of June 2016.

I and my colleague from West Virginia, Senator MANCHIN, recently introduced a bill that would require the Office of Management and Budget to ensure that these appropriated funds are promptly disbursed. The Bipartisan Disaster Recovery Funding Act would start a timer—a shock clock, if you will—on when the OMB must release the money. It would give it 60 days to get these dollars untangled from the redtape and get them to the communities that desperately need them.

It is important to note that this change would apply not only to this particular block of funding but to any funds appropriated to States that are being withheld by OMB.

As appropriators continue to work on a disaster supplemental this week, I hope they will include a provision to ensure that States like Texas that have already suffered from a major disaster don't become victims of government bureaucracy.

It has now been 467 days since the President signed a bill that would have sent roughly \$48 billion to Texas, and it is tough to imagine what communities could have accomplished in that time and how much progress could have been made if simply Congress's and the executive branch's will had been carried out by the Federal bureaucracy.

With the 2019 hurricane season only a week and half away, it is critical we get this money out of Washington and into the hands of those who need it so we can begin to work on long-term projects to protect the Texas coast and protect against future storms.

Of course Hurricane Harvey was not the first storm to hit my State, and I guarantee it will not be the last. Texans have waited long enough for the funding that we were promised and that Congress appropriated over the signature of the President, and I hope we can pass something soon to improve the resilience in these communities and carry out congressional will.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

ABORTION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I want to start today by expressing my appreciation to all of my colleagues who will be out here today speaking out and to the women and men nationwide who are doing the same today in their own communities.

In the last few weeks, we have seen some of the most blatant and cruel efforts yet to deny women access to a safe, legal abortion. We have seen legislation so extreme, it would even block a 12-year-old survivor of rape from getting an abortion and sentence healthcare providers to prison for providing safe, medically sound care to their patients, which is their responsibility.

The extreme politicians behind these cruel abortion bans are not stopping in Alabama or Missouri or anywhere else; they want to take these bans all the way to the Supreme Court. They want to allow Brett Kavanaugh to do what President Trump and Republicans chose him to do—roll back the decision in *Roe v. Wade* that established a woman's constitutionally protected right to make her own decisions about her own body and her own healthcare.

They are pushing for this even though they know as well as we do that without the ability to exercise that right, women lose their lives; even though they know just as well as we do that without this right, doctors will be blocked from providing medically appropriate care. Let me be frank. Extreme conservatives will push these abortion bans all the way to the Supreme Court even though they know—or maybe even because they do know—that in a world where women cannot control what happens to their own bodies, they are less able to plan their family and stay financially secure and independent. That means they are less free and less equal.

I am not going to stand for that, and Senate Democrats are not going to stand for that either. I am proud to be on the floor today with a number of my colleagues who will be here standing for what our Constitution confirms is true: Women have the right to access safe, legal abortion, and this makes our country stronger because women are absolutely critical to our country's strength. I am proud to be making clear that even in the face of relentless attacks on women's health and rights, we are not going to back down one bit.

The truth is, there are certain extreme politicians around the country who want to take us backward to the

“Mad Men” era or, honestly, quite a bit before that. But they aren't speaking for our country—quite the opposite. In fact, the vast majority of women and men nationwide, including those from all different backgrounds, agree that abortion should be safe and it should be legal, just as our Constitution says. Those people are watching now. They are speaking up, and they are absolutely going to remember who stood up to protect women's health and rights and who pushed to take those rights away.

We have a number of Senators who will be speaking about this today, and I want to thank them for being here today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, while she is on the floor, I want to commend my northwest colleague and friend, Senator MURRAY, for all of her leadership, constantly coming to the floor and leading us on this enormous health challenge—a challenge that is really existential for so many women across the country.

Right now in State capitals across the land, Republican lawmakers are passing extreme bills that throw in the trash can 45 years of settled law on reproductive health. This is an open, coordinated attack on *Roe v. Wade* and a woman's right to choose the healthcare she needs. These Republican lawmakers are passing bills that are not only harmful, but they are overwhelmingly opposed by the public—bills with harsh criminal penalties for women and doctors, bills with no exceptions for cases of rape or incest, bills that explicitly compare women getting medical care to the Holocaust. Let me repeat that—bills that explicitly compare women getting medical care to the Holocaust.

I want to be clear on what this is all about. The party of Donald Trump is insisting on government control of women's bodies. That is what is on the table in Alabama, Georgia, Missouri, and elsewhere—government control of women's bodies.

Millions of women across the land are watching in anger and in fear as all of this is playing out. I have heard from many of them back home in Oregon. I heard it last weekend. I have four town meetings in the rural part of Oregon coming up; I am going to hear it again. Women are afraid for the future—their future and their family's future—because they know what is at stake with this coordinated attack on their rights.

First, it puts women's lives in danger.

The reality is, abortions will still happen in States that pass these laws, but those abortions will happen later, and they will be unsafe. Women are going to die. That is a fact. Women are going to die because of these restrictions. If you need proof, just look at the figures before and after the *Roe*

case. In the decades before *Roe*, thousands of women died due to unsafe abortions. And those are only the ones people know about. That doesn't even take into consideration the unnamed, the unknown victims of those misguided policies. After *Roe* was decided in 1973, women's healthcare got safer. Now, once again, there is an effort to undermine that safety of women.

Second, in key ways, the future these restrictive laws are creating is worse for women and healthcare professionals than before *Roe*.

What we are talking about now is jailing doctors for life. We are talking about treating women like hardened criminals after they get a medical procedure. Women in some places are facing the prospect that they may need to report miscarriages to the government or they could wind up in prison.

The other side in this debate paints a picture of women exercising their right to choose that is unfair and unrealistic. These are incredibly difficult choices. Many women exercising the right to choose have just been hit with the most devastating medical news that prospective parents can face. It is not up to State lawmakers and government bureaucrats to step in and interfere with this intensely private and personal choice, but that is exactly what is on offer with the laws being passed in statehouses across the land. These laws bind and punish women with a level of government control that did not exist before *Roe*. This is right out of nightmarish fiction. It is a coordinated attack on women's rights that is cruel and dangerous.

Abortion and other reproductive decisions are healthcare, and healthcare choices ought to be made by women with the help of doctors they trust, not by the Federal Government and not by State lawmakers—women and doctors. That is it. Full stop.

My Democratic colleagues and I want to thank Senator MURRAY and Senator SHAHEEN, who have been such advocates for women's healthcare for many years in public service. They are here.

We are all going to be part of this effort that I am proud to join in to fight at the Federal level with everything we have to stand up for women's right to make intensely personal choices, and we are going to be joining those women across the land who are standing up and fighting with everything they have.

The government should not have control of women's bodies—end of story.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am here to join my colleagues. I was going to say I am pleased, but I am not pleased. I am disappointed that we are here on the floor today talking about something that should be an issue that is decided by women with their families and their physicians. Yet we are here to sound the alarm about the relentless assault State legislatures and