

America, the Senate could have sent a strong, positive signal by moving forward on the Violence Against Women Act. Instead, Leader MCCONNELL carved out another tombstone for his legislative graveyard—another popular bipartisan bill buried with no action by the Senate and tied by the leader in partisan gridlock.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, earlier this month, a report from Hawaii's Mauna Loa Observatory found that carbon dioxide levels in our atmosphere have now reached the highest level in human history—in human history. It was a chilling reminder that the threat from climate change is real, immediate, and existential. Almost everyone accepts this science and the gravity of the threat it portends. The only group of folks that still seem skeptical of climate science are Republicans and the Trump administration.

Yesterday the New York Times reported that the Trump EPA is planning to rewrite the established benchmarks for unsafe levels of air pollution. You heard that right. They are planning to use dubious math to obscure the real and long-known health risks of air pollution. These new formulations would result in fewer predicted deaths than what the experts have long agreed to. People will still die. The numbers will just be wrong about the effect.

Why, might you ask, would anyone want to obscure the full health risks of air pollution? Because then the Trump administration could use the fake math to justify further rollbacks to clean air rules at a time when global warming is increasing and when Americans know the danger. This Trump administration and the Republican majority are rolling the clock back—more carbon, more coal, more oil, and more gas, when we need less. We all know that.

What kind of Orwellian nonsense is this? The Environmental Protection Agency making it easier to pollute the environment? It is a textbook definition of “dystopian.”

As my colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE so often points out, dark money lurks behind so much of what the Trump administration does. Big Oil, Big Gas, and big polluters everywhere are the only possible boosters of this decision. It is their money, funneled to political organizations and politicians without a trace of disclosure, that motivates folks in the Trump administration to make it easier to release more pollution into the air.

We should be using the Senate to debate climate policies in search of common ground, but Leader MCCONNELL has decided to bring forward his version of the Green New Deal just so his party could vote against it. We know what Leader MCCONNELL and the Republicans are against. What are they for in dealing with climate change? So far, nada, zero, nothing—they haven't

put a single thing on the floor. The American people see the effects of climate change in their lives, and they know Congress must act. Only the Republican majority stands in the way.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 Howard C. Nielson, of Utah, to be United States District Judge for the District of Utah.

MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, Monday is Memorial Day. It is the day our Nation pauses to remember all those who laid down their lives in defense of our country, from Saratoga to Yorktown, to Iraq and Afghanistan.

We enjoy tremendous freedoms as Americans, tremendous privileges, but we do not enjoy these privileges by chance. They are hard-fought gains secured for us again and again by each new generation of American soldiers who lay down their lives in the cause of the free. It is important that we do not take what they have secured for us lightly, that we remember our freedoms have been paid for in blood.

Near the end of the film “Saving Private Ryan,” the dying Captain Miller tells Private Ryan of the sacrifice that has been made on his behalf. He says: “Earn this . . . earn it.”

I am not sure we can ever fully earn the gift that has been given to us by those who have laid down their lives in our defense, but we can attempt to live lives worthy of their sacrifice and to defend the cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion.

When we remember the fallen on Memorial Day, there is one other group we should remember, and that is their

families. Our Nation's Gold Star families may not have laid down their own lives for our country, but they gave their loved ones, their fathers and brothers, daughters and sisters. For the sake of our freedoms, they live with empty spaces at Thanksgivings and birthdays, at weddings and graduations, at their dinner tables and Little League practices. We owe them a debt also that we can never repay.

I have been privileged to visit more than one veterans cemetery, such as our own Black Hills National Cemetery in South Dakota—which we recently expanded to ensure that our soldiers will have a resting place for generations to come—Arlington National Cemetery, and the American Cemetery at Normandy. There is a special hallowedness to the ground at these places. Valor and sacrifice still linger in the air, and a deep peace abounds—the peace of the warrior who has fought the good fight and found rest from his labors.

General George S. Patton once said:

It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather, we should thank God that such men lived.

I might disagree with General Patton on the first part, as it is right and proper that we should mourn our dead, but with General Patton, I say: Let us thank God that such men and women lived.

May the memory of our honored dead be eternal.

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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor again today to discuss Washington Democrats' one-size-fits-all healthcare scheme. Every American needs to know about this very radical plan.

Democrats essentially want Washington, DC, to take over all of healthcare in this country and to abolish private health insurance that 180 million Americans get through their jobs. Incredibly, this proposal offered by Senator BERNIE SANDERS has the backing of many leading Democrats running for President and 109 Democratic Members of the House of Representatives.

So I want to continue the debate today by focusing on the terrible impact this radical scheme will have on all of the fine men and women who provide healthcare to people across the country. Of course, the impact on them will impact the patients for whom they provide care and services.

I am talking about the Nation's dedicated medical professionals, especially

those who serve in our community hospitals. I actually know many of these healthcare providers because I am one of them. For many years I practiced orthopedic surgery in Casper, WY. I was a medical doctor, a physician, and chief of staff at the Wyoming Medical Center.

When practicing medicine in Casper, WY—or anywhere in the Presiding Officer’s home State of Nebraska—you really treat patients from all over the State. That is because many people in Wyoming live in small towns. I am talking about patients in towns like my wife’s hometown of Thermopolis, WY. My wife’s parents are there. When they need specialty care, they go to Casper. For those who haven’t traveled in Wyoming, it is about a 2-hour drive one way when the weather is good.

My point is, when you work in the Casper hospital, you are actually covering a large area in our State, and that is often the case in many States. So when I hear that Washington Democrats want to have a one-size-fits-all healthcare plan, I wonder if they have given any thought to people in the Nation’s heartland, to people out west. Are they considering people in rural communities at all?

I will state that I think about the people of Wyoming every day. I am there every week. The staff at small hospitals who serve rural communities like Thermopolis, Rawlins, Lusk, Kemmerer, and at the Lovell hospital, where I attended a health fair this past Saturday, talking to all of the folks there—their needs are things I am not convinced Washington Democrats have any knowledge of or care for at all. The people at these hospitals work hard just to keep the doors open so that they can continue to care for patients right there.

So alarm bells go off when I see headlines like the one from the Washington Post that said:

“Who’s going to take care of these people?” As emergencies rise across rural America, a hospital fights for its life.

That is the headline in the Washington Post, referring to a community hospital in Osage County, OK. The hospital has a sign out front that reads: “A small community is only as healthy as its hospital.” That is the truth.

Hospitals across rural America are struggling. Many are, in fact, fighting for their lives. Still, Democrats are offering a plan that will destroy private health insurance in America, which is the lifeblood of our Nation’s healthcare system; 180 million Americans get their insurance this way.

Democrats want to drastically reduce provider payments which, of course, would drive many doctors from practice and shutter many small hospitals. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Administrator has said a one-size-fits-all system “would decimate physician networks, creating a permanent physician shortage.”

So how can rural hospitals survive with no financial cushion if Democrats

one-size-fits-all healthcare plan passes? Just ask the New York Times, of all people. Last month, the Times ran with this headline: “Hospitals Stand to Lose Billions Under ‘Medicare for All.’” Hospitals stand to lose billions.

The Times cites a study from George Mason University that found Medicare provider reimbursement rates are more than 40 percent lower than private insurance rates—40 percent lower. At these payment rates, the Times says, “[s]ome hospitals, especially struggling rural centers,” like those in the Presiding Officer’s home State and mine “would close virtually overnight.”

There would be an overnight closure of hospitals under BERNIE SANDERS’ and the Democrats’ one-size-fits-all scheme for medicine in America.

I am sure a lot of people listening out there are thinking, maybe it is all a mistake; maybe Democrats don’t really mean to threaten hospitals. Well, the fact is, Democrats have long argued that hospitals need to close. That is what they have said.

Look at what Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel, who is an architect of ObamaCare and a professor in Philadelphia, said on the subject. He actually wrote a book outlining all of this. It is titled, “Reinventing American Health Care.”

He predicted that 1,000 U.S. hospitals would close by 2020. Well, we are approaching that year. We haven’t closed 1,000 in this country, but over 80 have closed, and those are rural hospitals.

Last year he published an op-ed in the New York Times—the same Dr. Emanuel—ominously titled, “Are Hospitals Becoming Obsolete?” He writes:

Hospitals are disappearing. While they will never completely go away, they will continue to shrink in number and importance. This is inevitable and good.

Well, not in rural America—“good,” he says, that thousands of hospitals and patients who rely on them are forced to close their doors for good. I disagree fundamentally with this principle and what he is saying.

Of course, all people who practice medicine in small towns want to keep the doors open because they know the impact on the lives of the people who live in those communities. Just last week I had a chance to visit with Dr. Mike Tracy, a family physician in Powell, WY. He is past president of the Wyoming Medical Society. He is passionate about caring for his patients, and guess what. He doesn’t participate in Medicare at all. Instead, he provides his services privately by charging his patients a set, transparent monthly fee. He does what he does to keep his practice open. His focus is on his patients, not on Washington paperwork, and his patients are very happy. His practice is successful. The patients are happy with the time he is able to sit and be with them and look at them and focus on them, instead of the mandates of a Washington computer screen.

So you see, there are doctors like Mike all across the country who don’t

want a one-size-fits-all healthcare system. Many doctors and many small community hospitals cannot afford it, and they will not survive it. Certainly, many rural communities can’t survive it.

As the Presiding Officer knows better than most, as he has traveled his State and as I have traveled mine, if a small community loses a hospital, it is harder to attract doctors, nurses, teachers, businesses—all of the things that are vital for a community to have. So the threat is very real in terms of what the Democrats and what BERNIE SANDERS and the one-size-fits-all healthcare plan would bring to our country.

Let me just tell people who are watching the debate right now: Democrats’ one-size-fits-all healthcare—what this will mean for you is that you will pay more to wait longer for worse care. That is what it means. That is what it means to you. You will pay more to wait longer for worse care. That is what is at stake.

We all need to make our voices heard loud and clear: no to Democrats’ one-size-fits-all healthcare scheme, yes to real reforms that improve healthcare and bring down the costs for all Americans.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENERGY INNOVATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, it seems a bit surreal but necessary, nonetheless, to come here to the Senate floor to talk about the perils of socialism and its sudden resurgence within the Democratic Party.

We have seen our Democratic friends push for policies like Medicare for All, which would completely wreck the system that provides healthcare for our seniors and force all Americans onto the same plan, regardless of the fact that they never paid anything into it, like our seniors have, and regardless of the fact that they may indeed like their private health insurance that they get from their employers.

Do you remember when the Obama administration promised in 2013, “If you like your plan, you can keep it”? Well, I don’t really think they meant it, but that is at least what they said. Democrats have gotten so much more radical today that their motto should be, “If you like your plan, you can’t keep it under Medicare for All.”

They have also promised things like free college—and, believe me, “free” is popular, especially if you don’t think you are ever going to have to end up paying for it—promising anyone and everyone that they can go to college for free.