

interfere in our elections. It didn't seem too much of a problem for decades and centuries, but it has now reared its ugly head—by the way, showing the amazing wisdom of the Washingtons and the Madisons and the Franklins and the Founding Fathers.

The briefing we are going to have should serve as a turning point for this Chamber. It should focus our attention and spark an urgent debate on how to protect our democracy from future attacks. The briefing this afternoon should be a springboard for action. So I was amazed to listen to Republican Leader McCONNELL this morning, who, before the briefing has even taken place, seems to be prejudging the results of the meeting, saying that another Washington intervention in this matter is misguided. I was amazed to hear Leader McCONNELL take credit for the election security funding which Democrats fought tooth and nail to include in the Appropriations bill and which was initially opposed by many of our Republican colleagues. They skip over the fact that Leader McCONNELL and Republicans are right now blocking our efforts to include additional resources this year.

Leader McCONNELL, if you are bragging about having put it in 2016 and the FBI says the threat in 2020 will be greater, why aren't you letting us put more money in now? Why aren't you supporting that?

It makes no sense—a contradiction once again.

And here, amazingly enough, we hear Leader McCONNELL echoing President Trump blaming President Obama for the interference in the 2016 election—blaming President Obama. The Russians interfered. They certainly had conversations with the Trump administration. Donald Trump encouraged them to interfere, publicly. And now Leader McCONNELL has the temerity to blame President Obama? What a remarkable feat of revisionist history.

Let's be clear on two things. First, President Putin interfered in our elections, and he is to blame. Second, the Trump administration has not done enough to hold him and his oligarchs accountable. President Trump recently, when he met with President Putin, sort of made a joke of it. That is disgraceful. That is un-American. That is not defending the security of America.

Now, according to reports, we learn that the majority leader refused to work on a bipartisan basis to warn the public about Putin's interference in our elections in the midst of the 2016 election. And he blames President Obama when he was the one who didn't want to make it public? Give us a break.

We have a duty to the country to take this seriously and not whitewash the facts or prejudge the conclusions. This is about protecting the wellspring of our democracy—it is not political—and ensuring Americans have absolute faith that our elections will be free and fair.

It is unbelievable that in this Trump administration, unlike any other administration—Democratic or Republican—before it, interference in the election by a foreign power is made political. It is a disgrace.

I hope today's briefing provides Members with specific information about what the departments and agencies are doing to combat the threat to our elections and what we ought to do next. After it concludes, we cannot let this issue sit on the back burner. Democrats and Republicans alike must roll up their sleeves and get to work—the majority leader included.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, on healthcare, finally, as oral arguments continue today in *Texas v. the United States*, we must not lose sight of what is at stake here. Republican attorneys general, with the Trump administration's full support and backing, are trying to dismantle our healthcare system. They are arguing that millions of Americans—including 133 million Americans under 65 who live with a preexisting condition—should lose their care and their protections.

The lawsuit that President Trump supports and our Republican colleagues refuse to condemn would say to a mother or father of a child with cancer: If the insurance company wants to cut you off, tell you that you can't get the treatment your kid so desperately needs to live, that is OK.

Where are those Republican voices?

We all know the statistics, but there is a human cost and a human story behind each one. Emilie is one of my constituents, and I shared her story on the steps of the Senate yesterday. She was a healthy and active, vibrant young girl at age 7, but her life was turned upside down after a tragic accident. She fell off a horse and suffered a traumatic brain injury. Emilie had to relearn how to walk, how to talk, and how to eat—a 7-year-old.

The biggest challenge Emilie's family faced came when her private insurance said to her: Only 60 days of rehab, Emilie, and then you are out. It doesn't matter if you still can't feed yourself, and it doesn't matter if you can't walk.

But she was saved because of Medicaid. Medicaid stepped in, and the protections for Americans with preexisting conditions prevailed. Now Emilie has a great chance in the future. Do we want to tell Emilie's parents that we want to just cut this off?

What is wrong with our Republican friends here? It is the height of hypocrisy for Republicans to pledge support for Americans with preexisting conditions during the campaign season and then be silent as the Trump administration sues to take away all protections.

I call on Senate Republicans, for the sake of the Emilies and the millions like her, to speak out against this reckless lawsuit—a lawsuit that would spell disaster for millions of hard-working, fine citizens in this country.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we just heard the Democratic leader talking about the issue of healthcare and attacking the President and Republicans for not being supportive of protections for preexisting conditions, and I can tell you that is just not true. I can't think of a single Republican who doesn't believe we ought to provide protection for people with preexisting conditions.

Democrats have not acknowledged that ObamaCare has failed, and I think we can all see the evidence of that. We have seen skyrocketing premiums, copays, out-of-pocket costs, deductibles—all of those things have gone through the roof for a lot of people, particularly in the individual market—as well as a reduction in the number of choices and options. Fewer options and higher costs have been the legacy of ObamaCare, so the Democrats know it has to be replaced. The reason they know it and you can tell it has to be replaced is that they are already out there talking about a proposal—a completely one-size-fits-all, government-run, national approach to taking over people's healthcare in this country called Medicare for All, at a cost of \$32 trillion, which I will come back to in just a moment.

The President and his administration have also acknowledged that ObamaCare has failed because of the skyrocketing costs and fewer choices and have chosen to try to get that repealed through the courts. Either way, we are going to be having a discussion about healthcare here and about what is the best system moving forward.

Republicans, of course, as I mentioned, believe we have to protect people with preexisting conditions. Whatever follows in ObamaCare's wake, I think there is agreement on both sides of the aisle—both Republicans and Democrats—that preexisting conditions will be covered.

So let's just take that political argument off the table because that is all it is. It is nothing more, nothing less, nothing else than a political argument made by Democrats when they know full well that Republicans are on the record in support of protecting people with preexisting conditions.

The question is, What will we replace it with? We believe, obviously, that there is a much better approach that gives people more choices, more options, and creates more competition in the marketplace, which would put downward pressure on prices.

The Democrats, as I said, have endorsed and are supporting a \$32 trillion government takeover of the healthcare system in this country, which will put enormous costs on the backs of working people in this country. I will come back to that in just a moment.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. President, last Friday we learned that there were 224,000 jobs that were

created in June, the latest piece of good news about our strong economy. Thanks to the historic tax reform we passed in 2017 and our efforts to lift burdensome regulations, our economy has been thriving. Economic growth is up, and wages are growing at the strongest rate in a decade. Personal income is up, and unemployment is near its lowest level in half a century.

The benefits of this progress are being spread far and wide. Wages for the lowest earning workers are rising faster than for the highest earning workers. Hundreds of thousands of new blue-collar jobs have been created. Unemployment rates for minorities have fallen. The unemployment rates for Asian Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans are all at or near record lows.

The Wall Street Journal notes, “Nearly one million more blacks and 2 million more Hispanics are employed than when Barack Obama left office, and minorities account for more than half of all new jobs created during the Trump Presidency.”

When Republicans took control of the Congress and the White House 2½ years ago, we had one goal: Make life better for hard-working Americans. We knew that Americans had a tough time during President Obama’s administration, and we were determined to put more money in Americans’ pockets and to expand opportunities for working families. That is exactly what we did. Our tax reform legislation, combined with other Republican economic policies, has created an economy that has lifted up Americans from across the economic spectrum.

There is still more work, of course, that needs to be done. Farmers and ranchers, for example, in places like my home State of South Dakota, are still struggling thanks to years of commodity and livestock prices below production costs, protracted trade disputes, and natural disasters. But overall, American workers are doing better than they have in a long time.

Now we need to focus on preserving and building on the policies that have made life better for American workers over the past 2 years, but that is not what will happen if Democrats have their way. Democrats are not only interested in eliminating a large portion, if not all, of the tax relief that Republicans passed; they are pushing proposals that would result in massive tax hikes on ordinary Americans.

Take Medicare for All, as I mentioned earlier, which is a Democratic proposal for government-run healthcare. A conservative estimate sets the pricetag for this proposal at \$32 trillion over 10 years—more money than the U.S. Government has spent in the past 8 years combined on everything. A more realistic estimate is likely substantially higher, given that the Senator from Vermont’s current Medicare for All plan includes coverage for long-term care, which is an enormously expensive benefit.

On top of that, most of the Democratic Presidential candidates have endorsed providing government-funded healthcare to illegal immigrants as well. It is not just a matter of providing healthcare to the millions of undocumented immigrants already here in the United States. More and more Democrats are embracing what is effectively an open-border policy, which means the number of individuals here legally can skyrocket, further driving up the massive costs of the one-size-fits-all, government-run healthcare proposal the Democrats are putting forward. The final pricetag, I am suggesting, could be far more than \$32 trillion.

Of course, Democrats’ proposals are not limited to putting the government in charge of healthcare. They have lots of other ideas for more government spending, such as having the government pay for millions of students’ college education or eliminating student loan debt—although they don’t mention any benefits for Americans who have already done a lot of work to help pay off their student loans.

As expensive as paying for these proposals would be, they pale in comparison to the Democrats’ most expansive socialist fantasy, the Green New Deal, which has been estimated to cost somewhere between \$51 and \$93 trillion over 10 years—\$93 trillion. That is more money than the economic output of every country in the entire world in 2017 combined.

How are Democrats going to pay for these policies? Well, when they have an answer, it usually involves taxing the rich. That is all very well, until one realizes there is no way to pay for these policies just by taxing the rich. Medicare for All alone would ultimately require massive tax hikes on ordinary Americans and on American businesses.

What will be the consequences of that? Well, a substantially lower standard of living for American families who would see their tax bill soar and their take-home pay shrink, plus massive tax hikes would wreak devastation on the economy. Load a small or larger business with new taxes, and its ability to grow, invest, expand, and hire new workers shrinks dramatically. That would mean lower wages, fewer jobs, and reduced opportunities for American families already burdened with new tax hikes.

Lowering taxes for American families and American businesses has grown Americans’ paychecks and provided them with access to new and better jobs and opportunities. Raising their taxes would have the opposite effect. Yet raising Americans’ taxes is exactly what would happen under the Democrats’ plans.

Let’s hope that Democrats think better of their proposals before the American people are forced to foot the bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the previously scheduled vote at 11 o’clock, I be allowed to complete my remarks before that vote occurs.

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

DEBBIE SMITH ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, throughout my career, dating back to my days as Texas attorney general, I have long been a proud advocate for crime victims’ rights. I believe we all have a responsibility to provide men and women impacted by such traumatic events the resources and care they need when they need it.

Right now the Congress has an opportunity to pass two separate pieces of legislation to support victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. Sadly, both bills have been caught in the crosshairs of political jockeying in the House, with Democrats using a tit-for-tat strategy that has frozen both bills.

One of those bills is called the Debbie Smith Act. The namesake of this legislation is a woman whom I have had the honor of working with many times over the years. She is a fierce advocate for victims of sexual assault.

Like so many victims, her advocacy was born from a personal experience. In 1989, she was abducted from her home and raped in a wooded area. She reported the crime to police and went to the emergency room for a forensic examination, but there were no immediate answers. Though exact numbers are difficult to estimate, some experts believe that there are hundreds of thousands of untested rape kits that remain across the United States.

For 6½ years the DNA evidence of Debbie’s attacker sat on a shelf in an evidence locker while she constantly wondered who her attacker was and when he would appear again. Channeling that fear and frustration, Debbie made it her mission in life to eliminate the rape kit backlog. I have no doubt that because of her and the important legislation this Congress has passed for the past 15 years, we were making some pretty incredible progress toward her goal.

In 2004, the Debbie Smith Act was signed into law to provide State and local crime labs with the resources to end the backlog of unsolved crimes. More than \$1 billion has been provided to these forensic labs because of this law, and the legislation passed by the Senate in May will provide even greater resources for the program.

While the original purpose of the legislation was to reduce the rape kit backlog, this DNA evidence serves multiple purposes. It enables law enforcement to identify and convict people who commit other violent crimes and takes more criminals off the street. It also has a corresponding benefit for the wrongfully accused. It can actually exclude people based on the DNA test results in the forensic rape kit.

Because of the Debbie Smith Act, more than 860,000 DNA cases have been