

NEVER FORGET THE HEROES: JAMES ZADROGA, RAY PFEIFER, AND LUIS ALVAREZ PERMANENT AUTHORIZATION OF THE SEPTEMBER 11TH VICTIM COMPENSATION FUND ACT—Continued

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

MR. GARDNER. Madam President, this afternoon the Senate will vote on permanent reauthorization of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund. I am proud to lead this legislation with Senator GILLIBRAND, and I thank all of the incredible first responders for their efforts to make this day happen and, day in and day out, to get this legislation to where it is today.

This critical legislation would fully fund the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund and ensure that all those exposed to toxins and impacted by 9/11-related illnesses are thoroughly compensated, both now and as conditions are diagnosed in the future.

Solving this problem is urgent as more and more people become sick—people like Luis Alvarez, who came to Washington, DC, just a few months ago, postponing chemotherapy treatment to advocate for his fellow heroes. Luis is not here to watch from the Gallery today. He is watching from above.

As we celebrate this vote today, we celebrate the lives of people like Luis Alvarez.

The Never Forget the Heroes: James Zadroga, Ray Pfeifer, and Luis Alvarez Permanent Authorization of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund Act is named in honor of these three first responders who lost their lives to 9/11-related illnesses. Today, the Senate has an opportunity to honor these three and so many others we have lost who never stopped fighting for 9/11 first responders and the country they loved by voting yes on this critical legislation.

I have shared with many of my colleagues that I never had the privilege of going to New York City before September 11, 2001, but I will never forget my first visit after September 11, 2001. It was just a few weeks after the attack had happened. I will never forget the smell. I will never forget the smoke coming out of the debris piles. I will never forget the silent firetrucks—their lights on but no siren—as they delivered even more heroes to the recovery efforts at Ground Zero. I will never forget the fierce dedication of the men and women who came when they were called, watching the firetrucks with their flags heading to continue the work that by then had become so emblazoned in people's minds across this country.

The work they did in those days, those weeks, and those months wasn't just for those in Manhattan who suffered an incredible loss. The work they carried forward for our country became symbols of our security, symbols of our freedoms, symbols of this country's willingness, determination, effort, and tenacity to fight back.

Law enforcement officers and firefighters from across the Nation, including the West Metro Fire Rescue in Colorado, home of Colorado Task Force 1, have been tireless advocates for this effort. Every State has people who served in one capacity or another during the rescue and recovery operations of September 11.

West Metro Fire District chief Steve Aseltine was one of 64 Coloradans with Colorado Task Force 1 who participated, as he said, searching through the rubble piles. Steve said: No one should be at risk of standing up and worrying, when this country needs them the most, whether the American Government has their back.

If passed today, without amendments, the legislation will head straight to the President's desk for his signature. So I urge my colleagues today not to forget, to pass a clean bill, and to join me in opposing both amendments, and to stand with all of our first responders and heroes from that tragic day for this bill's final passage and ultimate enactment.

I urge this Chamber to support those who have given so much to this country.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

MR. PAUL. Madam President, today I will offer an amendment to pay for the spending in this bill. This is not something unusual. I do this day in and day out. It has been part of the reason I ran for office—that we shouldn't add more debt to our country without trying to pay for it by maybe reducing spending from wasteful spending.

In the last week or so, we have seen a manufactured crisis. Rarely has there been a manufactured crisis so intense—a fake furor instigated by partisans more concerned with scoring points than telling the truth. But, for some of us, the truth is still important.

The mob and demagogues in this body accuse me of holding up this bill for political points. They obviously don't know much about politics, because there certainly hasn't been any political gain by my holding this bill for debate and amendment. But I think it is important we do this, rather than rush through and everybody says: No questions asked, please. It sounds a little more like an authoritarian atmosphere than it would be a democracy, to actually have debate, discussion, and amendments. That is all we have asked for.

In fact, last week when we were granted the amendments, we said to the other side: Let's have the vote—last week. And all of those who were in such a furor, all those who were so hysterical that the world was ending said: Oh, we cannot vote on it—it was not convenient last week—because some of our Democrat Members have already gone home for the weekend. So when the mob was told last week they could have the vote, they said no. It is a manufactured crisis. As of today, the

fund in question has \$2 billion in it, and no one is being denied medical care.

So let's have an honest debate. Let's have an honest debate about whether it matters to this country whether we are \$2 billion in debt, and whether or not, when we have new spending programs—no matter how charitable, no matter how needed—whether or not we are going to pay for them by reducing spending in wasteful programs.

It is perhaps a historical anomaly that this bill appropriates unlimited funds for a virtually unlimited time period.

What would you think if someone came to you, they had a good cause, and they said: You know, my neighbors' house has burnt down, and I want to help them, and I want to give them unlimited money for an unlimited period of time?

That wouldn't be wise. No one would do that. So why do we, in our hysteria, throw out all common sense and say that we are going to approach this as if we don't have a problem?

We have this enormous problem in our country. We are borrowing over \$1 million a minute. My amendment today is to offer to pay for the \$10 billion in the first 10 years. Realize that this bill as written is not a 10-year bill. It is a 72-year bill. It goes to the year 2092. To my knowledge, we have never, ever had a bill that was unlimited in the dollar amount and unlimited in the time period. Mine would be to pay for the first 10 years of this. The pay would come by reducing mandatory spending by 0.06 percent. That is 6/100th of 1 percent of other mandatory spending.

At the same time, we would exempt Medicare, Social Security, and Veterans Affairs from cuts. We would exempt the vast bulk of mandatory spending, but we would still say: If this is a wise expenditure of money, if we need more money for this fund, we would simply take it from something that is less pressing.

No matter how good a cause may be, it makes no sense to borrow from China to pay for our immediate concerns. Spending someone else's money is not charity. Spending borrowed money is just not wise or sound governance.

Being a legislator should be about making choices, about deciding priorities.

For example, which is more important—spending \$275 million teaching foreign countries how to apply for U.S. foreign aid and teaching foreign countries how to get our money and how to fill out the grant process? Is that more important than the spending in this bill? We will never know because the people who promote this bill aren't willing to cut any spending. They are not going to look at waste.

We wonder why we have waste run from top to bottom in our government? Because no one is willing, even for a good cause, to say: Why don't we cut out some of this waste? Why don't we

quit spending money teaching foreigners how to apply to get more of our money?

To pay for more pressing concerns, shouldn't someone ask whether it is wise to spend \$300,000 studying whether Japanese quail are more sexually promiscuous on cocaine? That is your money. So when somebody is being asked for a good cause, ask why we couldn't eliminate money we are spending on awful things that should never have been wasted in the Federal Government.

To pay for more pressing concerns, shouldn't someone ask why we continue to spend \$50 billion a year building bridges and roads and hotels and gas stations in Afghanistan? Perhaps that money could be better spent here at home.

The debate today is not over the spending of the money. It is over, when we do spend money—even for a good cause—whether or not we should cut corresponding money that we are wasting around the world, much of it not helping American citizens and much of it going to foreign countries and foreign people.

To pay for more pressing concerns, shouldn't someone ask why we had a study last year that spent \$2 million seeking to know the question: If someone in front of you in the cafeteria line sneezes on the food, are you more or less likely to pick up the food and eat it?

Seriously, this is where your tax dollars are going. If we have a better cause, and we want to fund this fund we are talking about today, couldn't we say we will not spend \$2 million next year studying whether, if someone sneezes on your food, you are more or less likely to take the food?

Shouldn't we be forced as a Congress to make decisions, instead of just saying: Well, it is a good cause. So, therefore, we should not use our brain. We should put on blinders. We shouldn't think about it, and we should just say: Well, it is a good cause so let's just borrow the money from China.

Do you think that helps us as a country? Isn't part of legislating trying to prioritize spending, not just adding to the debt?

The leftwing mob maintains that Republicans have lost the moral high ground and can't talk about debt anymore because we supported a tax cut. Poppycock. This is misinformation. This is fake news. This is plainly people just not paying any attention to what goes on around here.

During the tax cut, which I supported, I offered cuts to mandatory spending to pay for the tax cut. The media seems to have forgotten this. But I forced a vote on the floor to say: Yes, we may be cutting taxes and, if it affects the deficit, we should pay for it.

Interestingly, though, the leftwing mob doesn't want to admit that when we actually cut tax rates, we actually got more money. The revenue coming in last year was actually greater than

the previous year. The tax cut didn't add to the deficit. The deficit went up because we continue to spend money and we actually added more spending. The curve of spending increases actually rose faster than the revenue coming in.

When the tax cut happened, I offered an amendment to cut spending to pay for it. This is a fact. The leftwing mob and all of their buddies in the media can do and say whatever they want. It is a free country, but it is an absolute out-and-out lie that Republicans who voted for this tax cut also were not concerned with spending. I, for one was, and I offered an amendment to cut spending.

The tax cut also was passed under a law we have had on the books for some time. It is called the pay-go law. This is a law that should be working even on a bill like this current bill. But we exempt ourselves from it all the time. The current bill actually exempts the pay-go rules: If you increase spending by \$10 billion, you have to decrease it by \$10 billion somewhere else.

It has been on the books for a long time, but like everything else Congress does, they try to bring in rules to say: Do you know what? We are going to try to control the debt and spending by forcing ourselves, when we come up with some new spending of \$10 billion, that we will have to come up with something to cut to pay for it.

What happens is, Congress just waives the rules. It is not that we don't have rules that should help with the budget; we have hundreds of rules. The pay-go rule is a good rule, but it gets ignored. We passed the tax cut. If the projections were that the deficit was going to go up, guess what, the pay-go rules would say there has to be automatic spending cuts across the board. This is something I support.

So what happened? About a month after the tax cut, a big spending bill comes through here. Both parties are guilty, Republicans and Democrats. They love to spend money more than anything else. A big spending bill comes through, and guess what. They waive the rule on pay-go.

At that time, I also brought up an amendment that said: Hey, you guys shouldn't waive the pay-go rule. If the tax cut causes the debt to go up, we should cut spending across board.

Let's be very clear around here. There are those of us who have been consistent from day one that the debt does matter. There is no particular animus toward this bill. In the last year, I have done this probably a half dozen times. In the last 2 years, I have probably done it two dozen times. That means every spending bill.

A month ago, it was spending for the border. I support money to be spent on the border, but I don't support doing it if it adds to the deficit.

The amendment I have today is identical to the amendment I had a month ago, saying: Border spending, even if you want to do it, we should cut money

from somewhere else where it is not as much needed and where it is being wasted.

I did it 3 months ago for the hurricane disaster relief. Every bit of new spending—it doesn't matter whether it is a good cause, bad cause, or an in-between cause, we need to not keep adding to the debt. This is a problem. We borrow over \$1 million—close to \$2 million every minute. This is a problem for our country. We are eroding the foundation of this country with so much debt—\$22 trillion in debt.

The tax cut was passed under the pay-go rules. I voted not to suspend the pay-go rules. I voted to actually have spending cuts to offset any increase in the deficit from the tax cut.

The establishment of both parties moved to waive this pay-go requirement. I forced a vote, and only eight Senators voted, which shows you where the real problem is. Why does the deficit go up so much? There is not one Democrat in Congress who cares a flip about the deficit. Not one Democrat in Congress will lift a finger to refrain from government spending. Therefore, everything—you name it, they are for it.

The problem is, Republicans aren't so good on this either. There are only a handful of Republicans who actually care about the debt, and many of them will vote consistently to raise the debt limit and vote to add new debt.

Today's vote, though, is but a prelude of next week's vote. This is the preliminary. This is the introduction to our problem in our country, over \$10 billion. Next week, it is the enormity of the entire budget. Next week, both parties—and watch this closely. People say: Oh, Republicans can't get along with Democrats. Guess what. They get along just swell when it comes to spending money and adding to the debt.

This bill will pass overwhelmingly today without any concern for the debt or paying for it. Next week will be even worse. We have something called the debt ceiling. Every time we spend more money that comes in, in taxes, it approaches a debt ceiling, and the debt ceiling says you can't borrow any more money. So conservatives say: Well, we should reform our ways and quit giving away money to Afghanistan and Mexico and all these different countries. We should have reform involved with raising the debt ceiling.

What is going to come about next week is no debt ceiling for 2 years, until after the next Presidential election. It is a terrible idea. It is fiscal insanity. They also will vote to forever get rid of the sequester caps.

In 2011, amongst the tea party movement, when more people became concerned about the deficit spending, we actually came in and had a reform. For the first time, we didn't cut spending; we slowed down the rate of growth of spending. In doing so, the deficit was narrowing. For a couple of years, we were doing better. Then what happened

was basically both parties once again came together. The Republicans said: We want to be in every war overseas we can possibly get involved in, and we want to have more money spent on the military.

The liberals said: We need more money for welfare.

Guess what. They are not at odds. You scratch my back; I will scratch yours.

The Republicans and Democrats agree on one thing: Spending money is the most important thing they can do. The deficit doesn't matter.

So when we come back, when we address this issue next week, what we are going to find is they are going to explode the debt ceiling. There will be no limits on the debt ceiling for 2 years, and they are getting rid of all pretense of having any spending caps.

A majority of Republicans, unfortunately, will even vote to get rid of the budget caps and to eliminate the debt ceiling for 2 years. This is sad.

Today, though, the Senate has a chance to vote to pay for this \$10 billion bill with very modest reductions in mandatory spending—reductions that actually exempt Medicare, Social Security, and Veterans Affairs.

Americans, particularly conservatives, need to sit up and watch closely how their Senators vote, for today's vote is about whether your representative really cares at all about the disaster that is our \$22 trillion debt.

AMENDMENT NO. 929

Madam President, I call up my amendment No. 929 and ask that it be reported by number.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. PAUL] proposes an amendment numbered 929.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require a sequestration of certain direct spending)

At the end, add the following:

SEC. 5. SEQUESTRATION.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

(1) the terms “direct spending” and “sequestration” have the meanings given such terms in section 250(c) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 900(c)); and

(2) the term “nonexempt direct spending” means all direct spending except—

(A) direct spending for benefits payable under the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance program established under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.);

(B) direct spending for the Medicare program under title XVIII of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395 et seq.);

(C) direct spending for net interest (all of major functional category 900);

(D) direct spending for any program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs;

(E) direct spending for Special Benefits for Certain World War II Veterans (28-0401-0-1-701); and

(F) direct spending for the child nutrition program (as defined in section 25(b) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1769f(b)).

(b) SEQUESTRATION ORDERS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For fiscal year 2020, as soon as is practicable after the date of enactment of this Act, and on the dates the Office of Management and Budget issues its sequestration preview reports for each of fiscal years 2021 through 2025, pursuant to section 254(c) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 904(c)), the President shall order a sequestration, effective upon issuance, that reduces all non-exempt direct spending by the uniform percentage necessary to reduce the total amount of nonexempt direct spending for such fiscal year by \$2,036,000,000.

(2) IMPLEMENTATION.—When implementing the sequestration of nonexempt direct spending under paragraph (1), the Office of Management and Budget—

(A) shall follow the procedures specified in section 6 of the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 (2 U.S.C. 935) and the special rules specified in section 256 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 906); and

(B) shall not follow the exemptions specified in section 255 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 905).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I am speaking on the bill as well as the amendments. In a short time, the Senate will vote on and pass a permanent reauthorization of the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund.

In my short time on the floor, I can't do justice to the years upon years of work by the first responders, by labor leaders, by advocates that led to this moment. Suffice it to say, this is not a day of joy for them or for this bill's authorizers; rather, it is a day of relief.

For 18 years, those first responders, some of whom are in the Gallery, have watched their brothers and sisters get sick because they rushed bravely to the Towers at Ground Zero. At first, they were told by the government the air was safe.

It was not safe. We began hearing of cancers that people never got when they were 38 or 40 or 42 occurring all of a sudden in firefighters, in police officers, and they only had one thing in common: They had all rushed to the Towers.

They had to persuade people this was real because they saw their brothers and sisters dying. Then, they endured folks telling them they were crazy for thinking they had sicknesses they suffered that had anything to do with 9/11.

They were not crazy, and the people who told them they were, shame on them, including government agencies and others. Then, once it was confirmed beyond a shadow of a doubt that these cancers and respiratory illnesses were linked to the toxic dust and ash around the pile, it became an exhausting struggle to get Congress to provide the care they needed but they couldn't afford.

There were numerous false dawns and delays, temporary reauthorizations. We were forced to wait and wait, “compromise” with people's lives. Excuse after excuse. Some Senators voted proudly for tax cuts, unpaid for, to the

wealthiest of Americans but demanded offsets for these folks who had served us, like our soldiers have served us, like our armed services.

Thank God those excuses, those delays end today for good, and our first responders can go home and do what they want to do—tend to their own health, their families' health, the health of their brothers and sisters who were suffering and ailing, and tend to the families who have lost loved ones but are still part of their families.

The 9/11 health program is already permanent. Soon we will make the Victim Compensation Fund virtually permanent as well, and the twilight struggle of nearly two decades to get these brave men and women what they deserve will be, hopefully and finally, complete.

Once we defeat the few amendments before us—amendments that will delay the bill further, if not kill it—we should pass this bill overwhelmingly so we can send the first responders—those here and everywhere—home where they belong, with their family and their friends.

These are the same soldiers of valor who have selflessly risked their lives in our wars and conflicts overseas. There was a war right in the city I love, and these were our bravest soldiers. They rushed to the Towers. Maybe some people were alive. Maybe there were people who could be saved. We didn't know that then. We saw families holding signs: Have you seen my sister Mary? Have you seen my son Jim? These people rushed to the Towers to see if the Jim or Mary or the others were alive and didn't ask about themselves.

Now we are asking America to stand by them, every American, every Senator—Democrat, Republican, liberal, conservative—that shouldn't matter on an issue like this.

We are now at the very end of a long struggle. The struggle may end for the people in this Chamber, including those of us, like Senator GILLIBRAND and myself, who worked so hard through the years for this legislation. The struggle does not end for those who are sick or who may get sick and for their families. At least we are giving them some degree of help because they gave us so much help on that horrible day, 9/11, and those that ensued just afterward.

Let's pass this bill once and for all. Let's do our duty to them, to America, and to our ideals.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam President, I rise to join my colleagues in speaking about our 9/11 heroes. I thank Senator SCHUMER for his extraordinary leadership, his unwavering support, his dedication to taking this across the finish line, and his unbelievable willingness to lift up the voices of people who were not being listened to. Thank you to Senator SCHUMER.

I want to first note that while we are debating this bill, there is a wake happening on Staten Island right now for

Detective Christopher Cranston. A father of 5, he was only 48 years old, but he will be buried on Thursday because of the months of work he did on the pile at Ground Zero at Fresh Kills Landfill. He spent his 20th anniversary just a few weeks ago in chemotherapy.

The eyes of the Nation are looking at this Chamber today to see if we finally will stand by our 9/11 heroes for the rest of their lives. In a few minutes, heroes such as James Zadroga, Ray Pfeifer, and Lou Alvarez will have their names etched into the history books forever, which is where they belong.

Their families are in the Gallery today—here again, walking the halls of this Chamber and this Congress to be heard, here again to ask one more time that this body do what is right: to stand by them in their gravest time of need. Their families are here today to watch whether this Chamber will do what is right. They are standing here with so many others in the 9/11 community who have fought so hard to demand that Congress do the right thing.

Let's honor their service today. Let's actually honor their commitment to coming here time and time again, not for themselves but for their brothers and sisters who are sick, who are still dying all across this country. Seven are dying a week. Let's honor the ultimate sacrifice they paid for responding to the call of duty when the Nation needed them most. Responders came from every State across this country.

Last week, we lost Richard Driscoll, the 200th FDNY firefighter to succumb to a 9/11 illness. More police officers have died since 9/11 than on 9/11. More than 10,000 people have been certified with a 9/11-related cancer, with more being diagnosed every day. More will get sick. More will die. Some of them will not be diagnosed for years. That includes responders, and it includes the residents, teachers, and students who stayed downtown because the government told them the air was safe. They told them it was safe to breathe, even though it was not.

This bill will not change any of that, but we can finally let the people in the Gallery, who are sitting here watching us today and witnessing this, go home knowing that the government will truly never forget. We owe them that promise. Today, we have the opportunity to let them get back to their lives, to be with their families, and to exhale. They at least deserve that.

I thank Senator GARDNER for his leadership on this bill. I thank Senator McCONNELL for staying true to his commitment. As I said earlier, I thank Senator SCHUMER for being a tremendous advocate, leader, and partner who never, ever, gave up. And I thank every single person who has spent their time and energy coming here again and again over these many years to advocate for this bill and for their brothers and sisters.

I ask every Senator to have empathy—just that bit of care for someone else—to vote yes on this bill and stand

by our first responders. I also urge every colleague of mine to reject the amendments that are being put forward.

First is the amendment from my colleague from Utah. Unfortunately, this amendment would accomplish only one thing. It would make these first responders have to go through this entire process again in just a few years. It would force sick and dying police officers, firefighters, and other 9/11 first responders to waste even more of their precious time coming here, away from their families, away from their loved ones, away from their cancer treatments, away from their last moments in their homes and communities, traveling back and forth to Washington and lobbying Congress to pass the bill for the fourth time. Do not fall into this trap.

Our 9/11 heroes deserve this program as it is written in the bill, without these amendments, which will only force them to have to come back here again and again. Stand up for our heroes. End the games. Let's reject this amendment, pass the bill, and let our heroes go home and live in peace, where they can breathe and finally exhale.

I yield the floor to my colleague from Utah.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is expired.

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to deliver my remarks and delay the onset of the votes until after my remarks have been completed.

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

Mr. LEE. Madam President, for many years, the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund has compensated the brave men and women who responded to the horrific events of 9/11. It has been a worthy use of money.

Of the \$7.4 billion authorized for the fund since 2011, however, \$25.4 billion has already been paid out. Since February of this year, money has gotten tight and claimants' benefits have had to be reduced. I believe it is only right for Congress to authorize and replenish the fund so that we can make those beneficiaries whole.

But the bill before us today has a peculiar feature, one that I believe requires our attention. The bill authorizes the program for 72 years and does not specify a dollar amount. If you look to page 2 of the bill, lines 8 through 10, it makes clear that this program is funded through 2092 and funded to the tune of "such sums as may be necessary." In other words, without any finite authorization, it offers no way to ensure that the money actually gets to its intended beneficiaries and is not lost in government bureaucracy or misuse.

That is, in fact, how we make sure that government programs get to where they need to go, by specifying not only the purpose of the fund but

also identifying how much it is that we are spending.

In 2011, the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund has always had finite authorizations, and it has always had an absolutely excellent, outstanding record of avoiding waste, fraud, and abuse. The 9/11 survivors and responders deserve no less going forward.

That is why I am offering a simple amendment to this bill, one that would authorize \$10.2 billion in additional funding for the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund over the next 10 years. To be clear, that is the full amount that the Congressional Budget Office has estimated is necessary for covering all claims through 2029.

My amendment wouldn't end there. It would go further to authorize an additional \$10 billion to be paid out in subsequent decades. It will not block or delay this bill's consideration, let alone its passage, nor does it have as its intended effect any kind of downgrading of the benefits we would be paying. But it would make sure that the money gets to the victims and the first responders who need it most—to the intended beneficiaries—rather than remaining vulnerable to the kinds of waste, fraud, and abuse that come about whenever we authorize something until 2092 with "such sums" language. This isn't the way we normally do things.

My distinguished colleague and friend from New York has made the comment that if this amendment were to pass, it would somehow make the victims of 9/11 come back again and again and go through this process over and over again. I don't see that. Those facts are not borne out by the record, which, again, indicates that the Congressional Budget Office itself has acknowledged that the amount of money I would be setting aside would be sufficient to fund this program.

This is how we make government programs work: We fund things for a period of time and for an amount of money that we believe is sufficient. This would do that. For that reason, I am proposing this amendment.

AMENDMENT NO. 928

I, therefore, call up my amendment No. 928 and ask that it be reported by number.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Utah [Mr. LEE] proposes an amendment numbered 928.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To limit the amount available for the Victims Compensation Fund)

Strike paragraph (1) of section 2(a) and insert the following:

(1) in subsection (c), by striking "\$4,600,000,000" and all that follows through "expended" and inserting "\$10,180,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2019 through 2029, and \$10,000,000,000 for the period of fiscal years 2030 through 2092, to remain available until expended"; and

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 928

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on

agreeing to the underlying amendment No. 928.

Mr. LEE. 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 North Carolina (Mr. BURR) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

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

The result was announced—yeas 32, nays 66, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 222 Leg.]

YEAS—32

Barrasso	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Blackburn	Inhofe	Sasse
Blunt	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Braun	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Lankford	Shelby
Crapo	Lee	Sullivan
Cruz	Paul	Tillis
Daines	Perdue	Toomey
Enzi	Risch	Wicker
Fischer	Romney	Young
Grassley	Rounds	

NAYS—66

Alexander	Gardner	Murphy
Baldwin	Gillibrand	Murray
Bennet	Graham	Peters
Blumenthal	Harris	Portman
Booker	Hassan	Reed
Boozman	Hawley	Roberts
Brown	Heinrich	Rosen
Cantwell	Hirono	Sanders
Capito	Hoeven	Schatz
Cardin	Jones	Schumer
Carper	Kaine	Whitehouse
Casey	King	
Collins	Klobuchar	Wyden
Coons	Leahy	
Cornyn	Manchin	Tester
Cortez Masto	Markey	Thune
Cotton	McConnell	Udall
Cramer	McSally	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Menendez	Warner
Durbin	Merkley	Warren
Ernst	Moran	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murkowski	Wyden

NOT VOTING—2

Burr Isakson

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 32 and the nays are 66.

Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of the amendment, the amendment is not agreed to.

The amendment (No. 928) was rejected.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 929

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question occurs on amendment No. 929 offered by the Senator from Kentucky, Mr. PAUL.

The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I would ask unanimous consent that the next two votes be 10 minutes in length.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is on agreeing to the Paul amendment.

Mr. GARDNER. 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 bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

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

The result was announced—yeas 22, nays 77, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 223 Leg.]

YEAS—22

Barrasso	Grassley	Romney
Blackburn	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Braun	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	Kennedy	Thune
Crapo	Lankford	Toomey
Cruz	Lee	Wicker
Daines	Paul	
Enzi	Risch	

NAYS—77

Alexander	Gillibrand	Portman
Baldwin	Graham	Reed
Bennet	Harris	Roberts
Blumenthal	Hassan	Rosen
Booker	Hawley	Rounds
Boozman	Booker	Rubio
Brown	Boozman	Sanders
Cantwell	Brown	Schatz
Capito	Brown	Schumer
Cardin	Cantwell	Scott (FL)
Carper	Capito	Shahreen
Casey	Cardin	Shelby
Collins	Carpenter	Sinema
Coons	Casey	Smith
Cornyn	Cantwell	Whitehouse
Cortez Masto	Carper	Wyden
Cotton	Casey	Young
Cramer	Cantwell	
Duckworth	Carper	
Durbin	Casey	
Ernst	Cantwell	
Feinstein	Carper	
	Casper	
	Cassidy	
	Collins	
	Coons	
	Cornyn	
	Cortez Masto	
	Cotton	
	Cramer	
	Duckworth	
	Durbin	
	Ernst	
	Feinstein	

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 22, the nays are 77.

Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this amendment, the amendment is not agreed to.

The amendment (No. 929) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute.

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

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam President, after this vote, the people in the Gallery above us, these brave men and women who have suffered unbelievably, will not have to come here again.

This should never have been a fight. It should never have taken this long to pass this bill and make it permanent. It should never have been a question. But now, finally, we have the chance to get this job done for our 9/11 heroes once and for all—our firefighters, our police officers, our EMTs, our construction workers, our survivors, our families who stayed in their homes at Ground Zero because EPA told them the air was safe.

This bill is a signal from our Nation, from this body, from Congress, that we

are representing people in all 50 States and that the Senate will live up to the words it has said over and over again, “never forget”—that we will never forget our 9/11 heroes and that we will never stop helping them when they are in need.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time is expired.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. We will pass this bill for them, once and for all, so they can get back home where they belong.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the third time.

The bill was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

Mr. RISCH. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

(Disturbance in the Visitors' Galleries.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Expression of approval is not permitted in the Galleries.

The result was announced—yeas 97, nays 2, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 224 Leg.]

YEAS—97

Alexander	Gardner	Reed
Baldwin	Gillibrand	Risch
Barrasso	Graham	Roberts
Bennet	Grassley	Romney
Blackburn	Harris	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hassan	Rounds
Blunt	Hawley	Rubio
Booker	Heinrich	Sanders
Boozman	Hirono	Sasse
Brown	Hoeven	Schatz
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Schumer
Cantwell	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Capito	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cardin	Jones	Shaheen
Carper	Kaine	Shelby
Casey	King	Sinema
Cassidy	Klobuchar	Smith
Collins	Lankford	Stabenow
Coons	Leahy	Sullivan
Cornyn	Manchin	Tester
Cortez Masto	Markey	Thune
Cotton	McConnell	Tillis
Cramer	McSally	Toomey
Duckworth	Menendez	Udall
Durbin	Merkley	Van Hollen
Ernst	Moran	Warner
Feinstein	Murkowski	Warren
	Peters	Whitehouse
	Portman	Wicker
		Wyden
		Young

NAYS—2

Lee	Paul

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

The bill (H.R. 1327) was passed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume executive session for the consideration of the unfinished business.

The Senator from Connecticut.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I congratulate all of those responsible for the passage of this long-overdue legislation. I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who made this happen but first and foremost all of the advocates all over the country but primarily in and around the Northeast. There were hundreds upon hundreds of individuals who rushed to that scene from my State of Connecticut, many of them dealing with potentially terminal diseases as a result of that action. I am glad we have stepped up in a bipartisan way and once again done the right thing.

I am on the floor to continue the conversation about healthcare. I wish I had as good news as comes with the passage of this legislation, which is going to extend the guarantee of healthcare to all sorts of heroes in and around New York. At the very same time, we are dealing with a potential calamity for millions of other Americans who also have serious conditions, who are dealing with diagnoses like cancer.

Today, if you have a preexisting condition, you know you are going to be able to get insured for that preexisting condition. If you are the parent of a child who has a serious illness, you don't have to worry about being denied care for your son or daughter because of that diagnosis. That is because we have the Affordable Care Act.

The Affordable Care Act has been on the books now for going on a decade. It says: No matter how sick you are, no insurance company can deny you care. That has made a world of difference for millions upon millions of Americans who have preexisting conditions.

The potential calamity comes in a court case filed by Republican Attorneys General, supported by the President and by Republicans in this Congress, that would try to use the court system to do what the Congress would not—overturn the entirety of the Affordable Care Act. Congress wouldn't do that. We debated it. We voted down measures to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Why? Because Americans all across this country rose up and said: We want you to fix what continues to be broken with the healthcare system, not tear down my coverage, not remove me from the rolls of those who are insured.

All across the country, over 20 million people have insurance just because of the Affordable Care Act—either because of tax credits we give people to afford private insurance or the 12 million people who got Medicaid because of the Affordable Care Act, never mind

all the folks who buy private insurance on their own, who can finally afford it because we don't discriminate against you if you are poor. People didn't want that taken away from them, so they rose up all across the country, and Congress listened. By the skin of our teeth, we voted down legislation to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Because opponents of the Affordable Care Act—in particular, this President and Republicans who don't like it—couldn't get the job done in the people's branch, they are now going to the courts to try to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Right now weaving its way through the court system is a case called *Texas v. United States*. I won't go into the complicated legal argument. The goal of it, if it is successful, is to wipe out the entirety of the Affordable Care Act overnight. It has been successful at the district court level. It was just argued before the appellate court level, and by the account of witnesses who were there, the arguments didn't go too well for those of us who think the Affordable Care Act should stick around.

There is just a simple question right now for my colleagues: Do you support *Texas v. United States*? Do you support the lawsuit that would wipe out the entirety of the Affordable Care Act overnight and replace it with nothing?

I put Republicans on here because I actually know what the answer is from the Democratic side of the aisle. Every single Democrat in the Senate opposes this lawsuit. It is not because every single Democrat thinks you shouldn't change anything about the healthcare system; it is because we don't think it is a very good idea to kick 20 million people off of insurance, jack up rates for people with preexisting conditions, and have nothing to replace it—nothing. That is what will happen if *Texas v. United States* is successful. Petitioners are asking for the whole act to be thrown out and nothing to replace it. That would be a humanitarian catastrophe in this country, if 20 million people all of a sudden woke up and found they didn't have insurance coverage any longer; if insurers were once again able to charge that family of a child with a cancer diagnosis two times, three times, four times as much.

The question for Republicans is, Do you support this lawsuit? I think we need to get some answers. I think we need to get some answers. Some of my colleagues are on record saying they hope it fails. More are on record saying they hope it succeeds. But I don't think this body can just box its eyes and ears to the reality of what would happen if this lawsuit succeeds.

We are not riding to the rescue this Congress. Let me just be honest with you. Given how fractious the debate is here about everything but in particular about healthcare, there is no way that the Congress and this dysfunctional White House can reassemble all of the protections in the Affordable Care Act if the courts wipe them out. That is

just not realistic. We don't debate anything on this floor any longer. We don't have the muscle to pass minor pieces of legislation like this body used to do 20 years ago, never mind a reordering and reconstruction of one-sixth of the American economy, which is what the healthcare system represents.

Republicans need to start making a decision. Do you support this lawsuit or do you not? If you do support it, you can't just say "Well, you know, if everybody loses insurance and rates go through the roof for people with preexisting conditions, we will figure it out" without having a specific plan for how you are going to do that. It is not good enough to just say "I hope that lawsuit succeeds. I hope everybody loses their insurance. And then, the day after, we will come back and we will see if we can try to find people healthcare." That is irresponsible. That is not satisfactory. It isn't enough for people out there who are living life in fear that their insurance is about to vanish.

The problem is, the last time Republicans started thinking about what they would want to replace the Affordable Care Act with, it was a joke. It was a joke. The Better Care Reconciliation Act, which was Senate Republicans' replacement for the Affordable Care Act—CBO found that it would increase the number of people without insurance by 22 million. It found that by 2026, an estimated 49 million people would be without insurance, almost doubling the number who lack insurance today. That is not better care; that is much, much worse care. So forgive me if I don't have confidence that my Republican friends who run the Senate today are going to have a plan to deal with a successful *Texas v. United States* court case that keeps insurance for people in my State, the 111,000 people in Connecticut who get insurance through the private market with ACA subsidies and the 268,000 people in Connecticut who are covered in my State under the Medicaid expansion.

It is time for everybody in this body, whether Republican or Democrat, to step up and say: A, do I support the lawsuit to get rid of all of the protections in the Affordable Care Act, with nothing to replace it, and B, do I have a plan for what to do if the lawsuit that I support is successful?

Chris, from Westbrook, CT, is asking that question of everybody in this Chamber. Here is what he said:

I am a 30 year old patient living with muscular dystrophy type 2B. Preexisting conditions can happen to anyone. . . . Disease does not discriminate. . . . No amount of pre-planning or prudence can stop you from preventing a genetic disease, for example. . . . You can be healthy one day, and have a health crisis the next. Everyone knows someone with a preexisting condition. It is a lifesaver—having insurance when you have a preexisting condition means being able to afford lifesaving medicines and treatments.

Chris is watching carefully to see what the answer to this question is.