

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senators PERDUE, CASSIDY, and CASEY.

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

The Senator from Georgia.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. PERDUE. Madam President, Nelson Mandela once said: "Education is the best weapon with which to change the world."

Today, this morning, 51 million students woke up and went to a public school in the United States. Each student carried a spark with which to light up the world in their futures. Unfortunately, today, given the realities that we have seen over the last few years, some of these students are at risk.

Last week was designated as America's Safe Schools Week. It was meant as a time to reflect on the steps we are taking to protect our children every day. Upon reflection, however, one thing has become very clear: In many cases, considering the current realities, our public schools have not been designed physically to deal with the student safety issue.

The consequences of this are heart-breaking. We have heard this story too many times: Parkland, FL, 17 lives; Newtown, CT, 27 lives; Columbine, CO, 13 lives. These were some of the darkest days in our country's history. None of us will ever forget the terror, the tears, and the devastation that these and other communities have felt. For the parents and the relatives of those affected, it is a nightmare from which many will never wake up.

This can't be allowed to continue. There is an implicit agreement that when we drop our children off at a school, we know they are going to be kept safe. In many cases today, we are not fulfilling that agreement. There are a lot of steps we must take in order to face this crisis. I am confident that if we come together in a bipartisan fashion and focus on doing what actually works, we can make our schools safer.

The U.S. Senate has a chance to get this started right now. Last month, in a bipartisan effort, Senators DOUG JONES, THOM TILLIS, and SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO joined me in sponsoring the School Safety Clearinghouse Act. This bipartisan bill is a critical first step that will help to protect students and faculty in our public schools in America.

The School Safety Clearinghouse Act will codify a recommendation from President Trump's Federal Commission on School Safety to create a Federal

clearinghouse containing all of the best practices for designing safer schools. The techniques contained in the school safety clearinghouse will come from the brightest engineers, architects, researchers, and educators in the country. It will be like a library that schools can trust when making critical decisions and when talking about physical upgrades in their environment. It is imperative that schools have the best design information because design flaws in school buildings are placing our students and faculty at risk every day.

When drafting this bill, our office met with Max Schachter, whose son, Alex, was tragically killed in the Stoneman Douglas High School massacre in Parkland, FL, not that long ago. On that awful day, the murderer fired through the window in Alex's classroom door and murdered Alex and two of his classmates. Senselessness. Had the glass been stronger or had the window been designed with an obstructed view, Alex might be alive today.

Madam President, fixing design flaws like these are simple matters that we need to take a step toward today to make our schools safer. Most schools understand this, and they are doing everything they can to close the security lapse.

In August, I saw this firsthand when I toured Mashburn Elementary School in Forsyth County—with Georgia's First Lady Marty Kemp—which has taken incredible steps with grants from the State, that the Governor made available, to enhance their safety measures.

Using this grant money made available by Governor Brian Kemp, Mashburn has restructured all their entryways, reinforced the doors to every classroom, and launched new emergency readiness protocols. As a result, Mashburn is better able to prevent tragedy from occurring.

And the best thing, it has in recent years actually developed a very close relationship with the local police force and sheriff's department. At Mashburn, they have a sheriff's deputy in school every day.

Every school in the country wants to upgrade their safety. The problem is that many schools don't simply have the information they need to make the best choices. The School Safety Clearinghouse Act will close this information gap once and for all.

This is not a top-down government program by the way. The School Safety Clearinghouse Act will never have an unfunded mandate or make any recommendations or force any school to take any action it doesn't want. Rather, the School Safety Clearinghouse Act will empower them to make the decisions for themselves.

Here in America, it doesn't matter if you have big dreams or humble ones; this is the land of opportunity. Everyone has the right to pursue their own happiness. A good education, as we know, is the best way to start that.

I learned that from my parents, both of whom were public school teachers. I see it happening today through my three grandkids. In this country, we promise all of our kids a good education. We now need to promise a safe education as well.

The School Safety Clearinghouse Act is a step that we can take right now, right here in this body, to fulfill that responsibility. We have no time to waste. Every day, students across the country attend schools to learn, grow up, and build their lives. The longer we wait to secure our schools, the higher the chance that some of those students will not come home.

This is not all we need to do; this is just a first start, Madam President. If this bill helps to make one school safer or saves one life, it will be worth it. Let's get it done. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President was presiding before and I heard several speeches by my colleagues on the Democratic side of the aisle speaking about the 1332 waiver process that the Trump administration is using to lower insurance premiums, and the kind of common refrain is: This is a terrible thing. We are eroding protections in the Affordable Care Act, and we should preserve the Affordable Care Act as it is. This is so ironic because the people who want to get rid of Obamacare right now are running for President on the Democratic side of the ticket.

If you ask BERNIE SANDERS if he wants to get replace Obamacare, he raises his hand. If you ask ELIZABETH WARREN if she wants to replace Obamacare and force people to give up their employer-provided insurance, she raises her hand.

Now, why do the Presidential candidates—Democratic Presidential candidates sit there and say: Hey, let's get rid of Obamacare? And when the administration does something to lower premiums, my Democratic colleagues stand up and decry this kind of assault upon whatever value they are speaking to.

What I think is the Democratic candidates running for President are so aware that healthcare costs under Obama have skyrocketed. Let me see if I can find my figures here, but it's quite remarkable.

Let's just speak a little bit about what has happened. Since 2013, the deductible for someone with single coverage has increased by 53 percent. And despite deductibles going up, say, \$10,000, premiums have increased 20 percent. So the patient's out-of-pocket exposure is increasing both in the deductible and with their premium. For a family of four in Louisiana—we looked on healthcare.gov just walking here—\$25,000 for the policy with an over \$10,000 deductible.

Now, this is not affordable. So clearly there is a concern about affordability. That is what the Trump administration has been trying to address. And frankly, that is what BERNIE

SANDERS and ELIZABETH WARREN wish to have Americans sacrifice their employer-sponsored insurance to address.

But my Democratic Senate colleagues don't want to do this. They would rather have all the protections of Obamacare, even if you cannot afford the policy. And truly, that is what we are doing now. And now, we get to speaking about the waivers that the Trump administration is giving, somehow they are saying these are terrible things.

Let me point out that, in the seven States with 1332 waivers granted under the Trump administration, health insurance premiums have decreased by 7.5 percent. Some States have had a double-digit reduction. Maryland, for example—and I will come back to Maryland—has had a 30-percent reduction in their health insurance premiums under the 1332 waiver given by the Trump administration. North Dakota had a 20-percent reduction.

And what about if you didn't get a waiver? In my State, which didn't apply for a waiver, premiums are expected to rise 10 percent this coming year—10 percent. So the family of four paying \$25,000 a year with a \$10,000 deductible will pay \$27,500 next year, with a \$12,500 deductible, meaning they will be out almost \$40,000—\$40,000 for their health insurance.

I suspect there is a lot of families in my State that wouldn't have minded if we applied for a waiver if we could just lower premiums, instead of seeing out-of-pocket expense continue to rise.

Now, there is a little bit of an irony here. Maryland has a legislature dominated by Democrats, and they actually got a 1332 waiver. So my Democratic colleagues who are speaking about how terrible these waivers are, they should look back to States which Democrats control who are applying for these waivers.

I am told that Montana has a waiver, Montana with a Democratic Governor who is running for President on the Democratic side of the ticket. Apparently, that person felt it was something that he would sign into law and otherwise approve because it would be beneficial to the people in the State.

I don't know why, in the Senate, my Democratic Senate colleagues want Americans to pay more for insurance. Why do they insist on continuing to advocate for policies which make healthcare, health insurance, so unaffordable?

This is personal for me. Besides being an American wanting all to have coverage, for 25 years, I worked in a hospital for the working poor, for the uninsured, trying to bring healthcare to those who could not otherwise afford it. It has been my life mission, if you will, as a physician, to try and get healthcare to those who cannot have it.

And so when folks want to give them this great policy, but you can't afford it, but don't worry, it is a great policy if you can afford it, I have to smile.

Like the Greek myth Tantalus—where we get the word “tantalize” from—where the prize is always just beyond the reach, just beyond the reach, always there to tempt, but you can never have.

So you have a family making \$120,000 a year having to pay \$25,000 for insurance, with a \$10,000 deductible. They are sacrificing so many things. It is tantalizing, but we are sure this is a better state of affairs.

Now, what the administration has done, they have given States flexibility to craft affordable options for families that do not have subsidies. It respects the fact that some States are different than other States. Imagine that.

Alaska is different than Rhode Island—Alaska, if you laid it across a map of the lower 48, would stretch from Georgia to California, but has fewer people than Rhode Island, and Rhode Island, which is a postage stamp compared to Alaska. Those States are different, so allow them to have different healthcare systems.

By the way, when we do this, we are assured by the administration that they continue to enforce protections for those with preexisting conditions and all other things that we as Americans, that we as Republicans, that I as a physician who have spent my life caring for the uninsured, value—so that, if healthcare is not affordable, it is not available. And what we have seen by the folks on the left who are concerned about healthcare costs is a doubling down on government control.

They want to go for Medicare for All. They want to take away your employer-sponsored insurance. But at least they acknowledge that cost is a problem. What my Senate colleagues are not doing, the ones who are speaking today, is acknowledging that cost is a problem, and you can have the greatest plan in the world and, if it is unaffordable, then that greatness is ironic. It is on a piece of paper, but it is not real in someone's life.

What we have seen is that States, when they come to the Federal Government requesting permission to put in a program which is specific to the circumstances in their State, they are not only covering the citizens in their State, continuing to have protections for those with preexisting conditions, but they are also lowering premiums by as much as 30 percent. And that is a good thing, and I have no clue why my Democratic colleagues do not want to see premiums lowered by 30 percent.

Madam President, thank you, and I yield the floor.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

REMEMBERING ELIJAH CUMMINGS

• Ms. HARRIS. Madam President, our Nation mourns the loss of one of the country's greatest leaders, Representative Elijah Eugene Cummings, whose life's work as a fervent champion for

civil rights and his beloved community in Baltimore, MD left an indelible mark on our Nation. Congressman Cummings died on October 17, 2019 in Baltimore, MD. He was 68 years old.

Representative Cummings was born on January 18, 1951, in Baltimore, MD. He was the third of seven children born to sharecroppers, Robert Cummings and Ruth Elma Cummings, who moved north from South Carolina in search of better opportunities for their family. Representative Cummings graduated from Baltimore City College High School and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in political science from Howard University in Washington, DC, where he served as student government president and graduated Phi Beta Kappa. Representative Cummings obtained a juris doctorate from the University of Maryland School of Law in 1975. Throughout his career, he received 13 honorary doctoral degrees from universities throughout the country.

Representative Cummings' career in public service began in 1983 when we was elected to the Maryland House of Delegates. Representative Cummings proudly served in this role for 14 years, eventually becoming the State legislature's first African-American speaker pro tempore. In 1996, he was elected to represent Maryland's 7th District in the House of Representatives as a member of the 104th Congress. Representative Cummings focused on legislative priorities that promoted equality and economic development, including: criminal justice reform, lowering prescription drug prices, and combating the opioid epidemic, among others. As a respected Congressman, he became a ranking member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform.

As the chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, Representative Cummings was a powerful voice who achieved a reputation as a skilled consensus builder. He understood accountability and protecting those who courageously spoke the truth to protect our Nation. He fought daily to ensure our democracy was not only intact but striving to live up to its promise. At the foundation of his fight was advocacy for justice and equal opportunity for all.

Representative Cummings made it his personal responsibility to champion civil rights issues, particularly voting rights. His fierce advocacy was fueled, in part, by the words of his mother who on her death bed, implored him to ensure the right to vote was preserved. He would heed her words by delivering his own stirring calls to action. He understood the significance of the right to vote in our democracy and worked tirelessly to oppose voter suppression, condemn discriminatory anti-voting tactics, and launch critical investigations when voters—particularly people of color—faced discriminatory voting