

tens of millions of uninsured Americans health coverage. This expansion has resulted in the lowest uninsured rate in our country's history leading to better coverage, access, and quality of care and I would never do anything to undermine this important law.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to address the House and make clear my opposition to the Trump Administration's attacks on our critically important Medicaid programs.

ADJOURNMENT FROM FRIDAY,
FEBRUARY 7, 2020, TO MONDAY,
FEBRUARY 10, 2020

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet on Monday next, when it shall convene at noon for morning-hour debate and 2 p.m. for legislative business.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MALINOWSKI). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. SCALISE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), my friend, the majority leader, for the purpose of inquiring about the schedule for the House next week.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the minority whip for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that the House will meet at 12 p.m. for morning-hour debate and 2 p.m. for legislative business, with votes postponed until 6:30 p.m. on Monday next.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the House will meet at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate and 12 p.m. for legislative business.

Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, the House will meet at 9 a.m. for legislative business, with last votes of the week expected no later than 3 p.m. We will consider several bills under suspension of the rules. The complete list of suspensions will be announced by the close of business today.

Mr. Speaker, the House will consider H.R. 2546, Protecting America's Wilderness Act. This bill is a package of lands bill out of the Committee on Natural Resources and would designate 1.3 million acres as wilderness or potential wilderness areas, preserving these public lands for the benefit of current and future generations.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the House will consider H.J. Res. 79, Removing the Deadline for the Ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. This bill would remove the deadline to ratify the ERA, paving the way for it to be added to the Constitution and taking a historic step forward for women's equality.

Mr. Speaker, I would add this is not an adoption of an assumption, that, in

fact, the 38 States who have ratified to date have not ratified within the framework of the Constitution, and, therefore, that amendment should in fact be judged to have been adopted.

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding back and for going through those items that are going to be up on the House floor next week.

I would like to ask the majority leader with respect to some of the things that were discussed at the State of the Union—and I am sure we are going to be talking about a few things that happened during the State of the Union.

The President identified a number of items where he challenged us in Congress to work with him on addressing some of the challenges that are facing our country. And he identified some items by executive order that he is working on, but he also identified some items from infrastructure—where I noticed there was applause on both sides of the aisle—to some areas on educational opportunities, school choice—where unfortunately, the remarks weren't received as equally as maybe they should have been—but it also provides us some opportunities to find some areas where we can work and achieve some things that would benefit people all across this country.

I would ask the gentleman, first, starting with infrastructure, there is tremendous interest that I have heard from Members on both sides to try to work on a package that we can get agreement on.

I haven't seen the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure tasked directly with doing that, but I have heard there is interest from Chairman DEFAZIO and from Ranking Member SAM GRAVES in trying to reach that common ground.

Is there an emphasis that is placed from the leadership of the majority on tasking the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure with actually going and working and going and finding that common ground, which we know is there, to try to put together an infrastructure package in these next few months?

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER).

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, the answer to the gentleman's question is yes. And indeed—as I think the gentleman probably knows—the leaders of the relevant committees, Mr. NEAL and Mr. DEFAZIO—Mr. NEAL on the funding side, Mr. DEFAZIO on the substantive side of the policy with respect to infrastructure and transportation and other items that we think need to be included in infrastructure.

We met with the President of the United States in April. Mr. Speaker, I will tell the gentleman, it is probably the most positive meeting that I have had with the President and that other members in the group had. This was Democrats and then the Secretary of Transportation was also there, Ms. Chao.

And we talked about our joint commitment to infrastructure investment. We had suggested, as the President suggested during his campaign, that our target be \$1 trillion over 10 years. In other words, a \$100 billion a year, or on average, investment in infrastructure so that we will not only create a lot of American jobs, but also assure ourselves of being competitive with our competitors around the world in the 21st century.

The President responded that he thought \$1 trillion was too little and suggested a \$2 trillion investment, i.e., doubling the \$100 billion to \$200 billion on average per year over 10 years. And we had discussion about that. We indicated that we agreed with the President that such an investment would be warranted, and productive and, frankly, grow the economy and therefore be an investment and not simply an expenditure.

Mr. NEAL made the point, Mr. Speaker, that the President—if we would give him some direction on what he could support in terms of funding that investment. And I made the observation, I said to him, “Mr. President, neither in the Senate nor the House will Republicans or Democrats support that big of an investment if you are not leading. To which he responded to me, Mr. Whip, “Steny, I agree with you.”

We then scheduled a meeting to be held—we thought—3 weeks, but it was some 5 or 6 weeks later. And unfortunately, for whatever reason—both sides have their thoughts as to why—the President came to the meeting and said he was not prepared to meet. And we have not had that meeting since.

But I will emphatically say to the gentleman, we want to work on infrastructure. We think it is critically important. The President said during the campaign he thought it was critically important. I think your side, both here and on the Senate side, believes infrastructure is important.

So certainly, as I said, yes, we want to see if we could work together to adopt a significant infrastructure package, which we think would be good for the country.

Secondly, let me say that the President also mentioned two other things—one of which was prescription drugs. We had passed a prescription drug bill, H.R. 3. The President sent down a message that he would veto it if it were passed as it was.

What I would suggest, following the regular order, the Senate ought to take it up, change it, amend it—do whatever they feel is appropriate to do—pass it, if they can, and then let us have a conference. Because we have all said that we want to bring down the prescription drug prices.

In fact, the President says he wants to negotiate. We included in H.R. 3 negotiation. The President said he wanted to key prices to our global competitors. In particular, we put six large nations, which are similar to ours, including Australia, Great Britain, Germany, Canada, France—and one other

nation—in that calculation. And that we would, in our bill, cap the prices at 120 percent of the average price across those six nations. That was something the President wanted to do.

And he responded to a question about negotiation, saying “I want to negotiate like crazy.” He is a businessman. He is a realtor. He knows a lot about negotiation and price. And so I think we have component parts in common.

And my suggestion would be, again, that they take up H.R. 3, which is the prescription drug bill, do what the Senate’s will is to do, that we go to conference, and that we discuss differences, harmonize the bills, and pass a bill and send it to the President.

So there is certainly, in my experience of a long time here, that is the way we should get that done. I think that would be positive for the country and I think we could reach consensus, hopefully from the administration, from your party, my party, and pass those two bills to the benefit of the American people.

The last thing I would discuss is the President said he was against pre-existing conditions being precluded from getting insurance. We share that view. We have passed a bill over to the Senate that affects that end. The Senate could take that bill up. Again, work on it, do whatever the will of the Senate is to do, go to conference. And assuming that we follow the President’s stricture of wanting to ensure that preexisting conditions do not prohibit anybody from getting insurance, we could pass that bill.

So my response is that we pass three bills—or two bills and then infrastructure, which were four—and those are positive items we can work on, and we are prepared to do so.

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. On those fronts, clearly there is an ability to find common ground as we talk about infrastructure. There has been a lot of discussion over what that number would be, what the amount would be, because ultimately, it would have to be a number that we could both get an agreement amongst Republicans and Democrats that would be paid for.

And I think both sides acknowledge, it has got to be paid for. That has usually been the sticking point with infrastructure. But within that, whether it is \$200 billion or \$2 trillion, there is an understanding that we need to do more work to try to find out how we can get agreement on how to pay for it. And I do think the ability is there to find that agreement. The amount would be variable.

But also, it is something the President has talked about, as well as a number of Members of Congress have, making reforms to the way we build major projects: roads, bridges. The infrastructure delays so often are caused by red tape that is unnecessary.

I have heard from Governors, both Republican and Democrat, that would like to see Congress not only send

money—obviously, the States would like to see more Federal money come—but also, to see less strings attached so that a project that right now might take maybe 10 years to do, because of so many overlapping delays in red tape, that should maybe take 2 years at most. In many cases, that delay alone is what prohibits the project from being done because it drives the cost up so much. Because a project that might take 10 years, in many cases is going to be deemed unaffordable and it just gets scrapped as opposed to if we address not just the financing, but also the bureaucracy and eliminating red tape so that we can get more projects done quickly. I think that would be another area where there is a lot of mutual interest in seeing if we can come together.

And the President is very interested in doing that, when I have had talks with him. It is not just the amount that we are able to get agreement upon, but it is also the reforms to the red tape so that we can move projects quicker. And in many cases, do projects that are unaffordable because of those delays that are unnecessary. And I know that is something we can work on. Hopefully, we can get everybody together a few more times to get closer to finding that agreement on infrastructure.

As it relates to healthcare, there has definitely been a divide between our sides, if you look at H.R. 3. I think the gentleman recognizes it was a very bipartisan bill. The vote reflects that.

The Senate—however our agreement might be on how the Senate does business, clearly, they do business differently than the House—but traditionally, they have been reluctant to take up hyper-partisan bills when they are moving things through. They will go more to a bill that has got more broad support. USMCA is a real good example of that. It is probably the best template for how both sides can work together to do something big. Something very bipartisan, something very good for our country and something that we were able to get moved through both sides.

□ 1230

If you look at H.R. 19, for example, I would suggest to the gentleman that whatever the bill number is, it is not really the number of the bill. It is what is ultimately in it that we can get bipartisan agreement upon.

H.R. 19 was an approach that we took to say let’s go find not the partisan approaches to healthcare, but areas where we had broad bipartisan support, including the package of bills that came out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee unanimously.

Most people across the country are shocked when they hear that Congress actually did work together.

Republicans and Democrats came together to put together a package of bills that would lower drug prices that the President would sign that could be

in law today where prescription drugs, generic drugs, would be on the market quicker so people could be paying a lower cost.

That package of bills came out of committee unanimously. Every Democrat, every Republican worked for months. It took a long time to put that agreement together, but, ultimately, both sides did come together.

If we could look at those approaches. And, again, H.R. 19 includes only bills that were bipartisan. People had worked together on various elements of improving healthcare, from lowering prescription drugs, protecting pre-existing conditions, but not in a partisan way, in a bipartisan way that could actually get signed into law.

One way or another, we are going to find some issues where we can move, both Republican and Democrat coming together, bills over to the Senate. Those would clearly have a much higher likelihood of not only getting taken up by the Senate, but actually getting signed into law.

So I would suggest, when you look at some of those approaches, the bipartisan approach where you don’t have a Presidential veto, but you also have a strong ability to get Senators on both sides to want to take that up as well.

And then, finally, on school choice, the Education Freedom Scholarship and Opportunity Act, this is something that President Trump cited in the State of the Union specifically, and you can see it in isolated cases.

I come from a city, New Orleans. I was born in the city of New Orleans. I was on the board of Teach for America in New Orleans, and we had a dramatic overhaul of our public school system where we created a charter school movement.

It was actually a Democrat Governor, Kathleen Blanco, who, unfortunately, passed away recently, who signed that bill, Republicans and Democrats working together, that has transformed some of the worst failed public school systems in the country.

New Orleans’ public school system—prior to our reforms, considered by most as the most failed public school system in the country—now has a very healthy charter school movement where children have real opportunities. Parents have real opportunities. Schools are competing for students, and it is working for the student. This is in a large urban system where it was failed, and now it is very successful.

Clearly, no system is perfect, but there are many more options there. There are many more options for parents.

Congressman BYRNE has a bill—there are other bills that are out there—to try to give at least some additional options to families so that, if they are in a failing school, they can have a better place to go, and, ultimately, the system would be working better for the students.

So, on all of those fronts, I would hope that we could find those areas of

common ground and start there, build that, and work with the Senators and with the President, who wants to address these issues, like we were able to address USMCA, which was signed into law last week.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comment.

First, let me talk about the prescription drug bill. We did pass a bill that was a compilation of six bills that had five Republican supporters when we voted on it. So there was a bipartisan bill.

Let me suggest we ought not to dismiss however the Senate operates, the way the regular order operates is we pass a bill. Yes, we are in charge, and, like you, we pass bills that we think are important. When you were in the majority, you did the same thing. Some had Democratic votes, some did not. But the Senate had an opportunity to send us back bills.

We have 275 bills that we have done. We think they are all on substantive matters that deal with items that are good for the people, for the American people, and the Senate has not acted on them.

The way the system ought to work is we send our ideas over there; if they have different ideas, they send them back to us, and we go to conference and resolve it. I agree with the gentleman, that is what we ought to do, and I am hopeful that we could do that.

But the bill that we did pass, as I say, was a compilation of seven bills and had five Republicans. But, as you do, five Republicans makes it a bipartisan piece of legislation, and the Senate could send it back with something we don't agree on and try to resolve it because we want to reach that end.

The other bill the gentleman talks about, H.R. 3, the bill that we brought out had improvements to the ACA to make it work for the American people.

Your side, of course, wants to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Our side differs and believes that, in fact, millions of people, not only those who avail themselves of ACA—and, in the short term, it didn't bring down premiums, but it is now starting to bring down premiums, as we thought it would.

The constant assaults on the ACA by people who want to see it repealed have obviously hurt that because it has undermined certainty, which means that the insurers are not certain what the rules are going to be, and, therefore, our view is the premiums are still inflated.

But, again, I would urge the whip to talk to Mr. McCONNELL and say: Look, we have a lot of bills over there. Pass your version of the bill, send it back and let us work on it, and let's see if we can get to an agreement.

That is how we have done for hundreds of years, and that is the way we ought to continue to do it.

I realize that Mr. McCONNELL, as any majority leader the Senate has, has

challenges in doing that; and what I think, frankly, he does not want to do is get to a bipartisan agreement which will allow passage through the Senate.

We don't have that here, as you know. Your side could pass bills on a partisan basis when you were in charge; we can do the same.

As I say, we had five Republicans agree with us on the bill to which you referred, but I would hope you would urge Senator McCONNELL to pass our bills.

Senator BRAUN from Indiana was on TV with Chuck Todd on "Face the Nation" talking about impeachment. He said: Let's get through this impeachment and get to the people's business.

I think that was a reasonable proposition. The problem is the Senate is not getting to the people's business. They are not passing their own bills, and they are not passing our bills. In fact, they are spending all their time confirming judges.

We think that has a purpose of making sure that, for the long term, whether they are in the majority or not, they will have an influence on what happens in the United States. I understand that political motivation, but it is impeding us doing the people's business.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. SCALISE and I try to work together. I would hope that the Senate would work together so that they could send us back bills of their choice, we can go to conference, and we can make things happen.

This House, last year, passed over 400 pieces of legislation. I don't have the exact number that the Senate has passed of significant bills as opposed to naming post offices or something like that, but it is in the tens, not the hundreds.

Mr. SCALISE. Clearly, we have got a lot of agreement on our disagreement with the Senate's way of doing business. Of course, one of their impediments that I know I have encouraged a change in that they haven't taken up is the 60-vote rule just to bring up a bill.

So many of the bills, when we were in the majority, that would go over to the Senate that we felt strongly about that would not be brought up, it was a majority Republican Senate, but because they have a 60-vote requirement, the minority could and would, on occasion, prevent many of those bills from coming up.

But that is why I suggested to the gentleman, what we found is, of the issues we would like to tackle that we really do feel confident we can get an agreement with the President on, the Senate has shown a higher likelihood of taking up a bill if it has got that broad support.

And so in the example of H.R. 3—and, for the record, there were only two Republicans who voted for it—while that could be called bipartisan, there was a separate package of bills that came out of committee unanimously.

So, if you have one approach that still is viewed as very partisan, with just two Republicans voting for it, to

address healthcare issues, if there is a different way to approach it where every Republican and every Democrat on the committee of jurisdiction passed those bills that would lower drug prices and the President said he would like to sign it, I would think the gentleman would agree, if those two bills are put side by side, which one do you think would have a higher likelihood of making it through the Senate to the President's desk? It is very clear that the one that was unanimous would have a higher likelihood.

And that is why I just suggested H.R. 19, because that was a bill that, while we would have liked to have included a number of other issues that maybe just our side might support, we put those on the side for now to say let's find those areas in healthcare where we have very broad support amongst Republicans and Democrats, and that is reflected in H.R. 19. You want to put a different package together.

If the approach is let's address this in a bipartisan way, we have a very high likelihood of getting not just the President's support, but also the Senate's support at moving that through.

I don't know if the gentleman has any more comments on that.

Mr. HOYER. I would simply say, if we reach a consensus in the Congress—we are a coequal, separate branch of government—and whether Obama was President or whether Mr. Trump is President, I am for the Congress acting on that which it agrees.

Is it helpful to have agreement with the President? It is. But if we can't reach agreement with the President, our responsibility as a Congress, the Senate and the House, is to move policies that we believe are advantageous for the people.

If the President disagrees, then we have the option of overriding that veto. It is doubtful that we would do that, I understand. But that is the process that I think is most productive and most expected by the American people.

I would again reiterate, on the bill that you keep saying could have unanimous support, in my opinion, what it would not have in terms of healthcare is support for doing what we so fervently believe needs to be done, and that is to make sure the ACA works as it was intended to do.

If there is an alternative, we should consider that. But, very frankly, neither the President nor your side of the aisle has had agreement on an alternative.

Senator McCain, as you know, was the deciding Republican vote on the last health bill that you sent to the Senate, and you sent that when you were in the majority. It didn't pass, notwithstanding the fact that you also had the majority in the Senate.

Two weeks after you had the celebration at the White House, I was astounded to hear that the President effectively called that a mean bill.

So we do have substantial disagreements. That does not mean that, given

the fact that we have a Democratic House, that is, that we are in the majority, and a Republican Senate with the Republicans in the majority—now, I understand the gentleman's concern that it is necessary to get bipartisan agreement in the Senate in order to get that 60-vote threshold. And you and I may agree on the 60-vote threshold of getting bills on the floor. It is one thing to pass something or not.

But, in any event, I would urge the gentleman to urge Mr. McCONNELL to pass their prescription bill. And if it is what you say and it can be done unanimously, send it over here and we will have a conference. Because both of us have articulated that we are for making sure that prescription drug costs do not price people out of being healthy. So I would urge you to do that.

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

And now that the Senate has a little more free time, maybe we can get them to take up some of that legislation. I surely hope that we, on both sides, will continue working toward those, because there are areas of common ground that many have found and many have worked for months to find.

I do want to shift gears and talk about the decorum the night of the State of the Union.

The President talked about many things, as in any State of the Union, and I have attended 10 now. We have had Republican and Democrat Presidents, and there are things that I agree with in certain States of the Union, and you can stand, you can sit, you can applaud. But I think we all saw something that goes way beyond and, in fact, violates the rules of decorum in the House, and that is when the Speaker ripped up the speech.

Clearly, it was a premeditated move. I have seen actual video of her practicing or starting to rip it prior to the end of the speech.

But when you go through the speech—and, again, the President's theme was “the great American comeback,” and he talked about things that are working well in our country, working well for everybody, where every segment of society is benefiting, and, of course, as every President since Ronald Reagan has done, highlighting some of those great things that are happening in our country by bringing people into the gallery to show the real face on some of these great things that our country does.

Again, if part of a policy that created that great visual is something that one side disagrees with, some people stand up, some people don't. But to suggest that it didn't happen or that it is a lie—as some in the leadership of your majority actually said, the whole speech was a lie—I would ask: Was General Charles McGee's recognition as a Tuskegee Airman a lie? I think that was something great that people enjoyed celebrating.

Kayla Mueller, the humanitarian worker who was brutally murdered by

al-Baghdadi—it happened. Her family was here. And al-Baghdadi was taken out by American troops, which I think was the right thing to do. That is not a lie. That is something that we ought to recognize and respect.

□ 1245

When Staff Sergeant Christopher Hake was killed serving a tour of duty in Iraq by a roadside bomb that was generated from an Iranian terrorist, which was led by General Soleimani. And now Soleimani is gone because the President took action to take him out. That happened. It is not a lie.

In fact, the fact that Soleimani is gone is something we should all celebrate, just as we celebrated when President Obama gave the order to take out Osama Bin Laden.

I think for most people there wasn't a dry eye in the House. I know I have heard from friends all across the country who were tearing up when they saw First Class Sergeant Townsend Williams, who had been on his fourth tour in the Middle East, and here was his wife and young children, and the President surprised surely her, and all of us, by bringing him back home. What a special moment that was, just to see that family reunited.

And, again, tears, I think, were not a partisan issue at that moment. But it clearly did happen, and is not a lie, and it is something, again, we should all celebrate.

But again, for decorum of the House, for the Speaker to do that, I think most would agree, was not appropriate. At a minimum, an apology should have happened. There wasn't.

We brought legislation yesterday to rebuke the Speaker to make it clear that that is something not becoming of any Member of the House, let alone the Speaker of the House. Unfortunately, it was tabled on the roll call vote yesterday.

But I would hope that we could recognize, when that happens again, that we won't tolerate that kind of activity from our Members, let alone our leader.

If the gentleman has anything to say about that, I will yield.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, starting a State of the Union with a shout of “four more years” reminds me more of a rally than a State of the Union.

Clearly, neither the Speaker, nor any of us in any way diminished people that he introduced; some of whom I severely disagree with and thought that the actions taken with respect to that individual were totally inappropriate in a State of the Union because it served further to divide and to undermine any ability to work together.

Having said that, “four more years” was disrespectful to this institution.

The recitation in the gentleman's resolution of the honoring of individuals he just reflected had nothing to do with the State of the Union, but had everything to do with honoring people who had done great things, experienced

great hardship, who ought to be empathized with; no one was saying those were a lie.

One can interpret the speech for what each believed it was and can say something about it and reflect to the American people what they think of the substance of the representation of the State of the Union.

It had nothing to do with the people who were honored, whether we agreed with them being honored or not. Certainly, I agreed with almost every one of them, save one.

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's comments, but those names were part of that document that was ripped, and I am sure many of them were as offended as we are that it happened. I just would hope it wouldn't happen again. I wish we would all speak out equally against that.

I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, none of those individuals should take anything that was done personally. In fact, almost every one of those individuals was honored by people on this side of the aisle and that side of the aisle acknowledging them and honoring them with appropriate action.

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman making that statement, and I would share that. I wish the person who took the action would make that statement to those people because many were offended. But that will be left to discuss later.

But for now, I look forward to working with the gentleman on all of these issues that we discussed that the President offered the olive branch for us to work with him on and, I think, are very achievable if we do roll up our sleeves and tackle it together.

I think there is, again, a template for how to do it. USMCA is clearly one, and there are many others. 21st Century Cures is another example when we were in the majority with a Democrat President and worked very closely to achieve something that will be a milestone in curing major diseases for years to come; and, hopefully, we can deliver more of those kinds of wins for the American people that we all represent.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

GUN VIOLENCE SURVIVORS WEEK

(Mr. HORSFORD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HORSFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate Gun Violence Survivors Week.

Every Nevadan was affected by the October 1 shooting that claimed 59 lives, injured more than 800, and shattered the lives of countless more. Gun violence has touched too many of our lives, both on that day, 2 years ago, and daily. In Nevada, someone is killed by gun violence every 19 hours.