

Kevin Neale, Kirby Reitz, Thanh Pham, Bryan Whitney, Eric Zeitlin, Lori Thabet, Luke Gallagher, Mariano Molina, Carlos Velado, Rogelio Velado, Ward Webster, Bob Becker, Kristen Betsill, Matt Commeree, Kristy Dyson, Torgunn Eckroad, John Evanko, Lori Helm, Lolita Graef, Carol Anne Jarrett, Kevin Loftus, Nate Russell, Angelo Skarlatos, Diego Torres, and John Viscardi.

In the Office of the Chief Information Officer: Jonathan Braxton, Tiffany Deliberto, David Gately, John Hartsfield, Bill Hill, Chris Humphrey, Rudolph Janifer, Katie Miller, Eric Quintos, Jack Reynolds, Bryan Steward and Tony Williams.

In the Office of Security and Emergency Preparedness: Wendy Colmore, Gordon Liscomb, and Ronda Stewart.

In the Printing, Graphics and Direct Mail Office: Julio Benitez, Shayna Mack, George Thompson, Scott Wilson, John Zupko.

The Architect of the Capitol, Brett Blanton and Mark Reed.

In the Government Publishing Office, Hugh Halpern and his team.

And last but certainly not least, in my own Office of the Majority Leader: Valerie Chicola, Katherine Grayson, Emily Hauck, and Suzanne Youngblood.

A great many talented and dedicated professionals went far above and beyond the ordinary course of their duties to help the U.S. Senate complete this unusual but essential constitutional duty. This institution is not good enough at saying "thank you," let alone after an undertaking of literally historic proportions. We are grateful to all of you for your work—these past days and every day.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

SENATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, the impeachment process that has consumed our country over the last several months is finally at an end. Every Member of this Chamber has spent dozens of hours, if not more, studying the precedents, listening to the House managers and the President's legal team as they presented their arguments, including the testimony of 13 witnesses whose sworn testimony was presented during the Senate trial.

In the end, the majority of the Senators agreed that President Trump should be acquitted of the charges brought by the House. No matter how each Senator voted or felt about the end result, I can hope that we would all agree on one thing, and that is, it is time to move forward.

Impeachment has paralyzed the work of Congress for far too long, and we can't continue to allow the divisions and partisan games that are associated with it to prevent us from doing the jobs we were sent here to do. We are 9 months away from the next election. I think it is somewhere around 267 days, if I am not mistaken. That is when the American people will choose their next President and vote on the direction of the country. But until then, our constituents expect us to use the remainder of the time we have here to find

consensus where and when we can and to make progress on issues that they care most about.

For my constituents in Texas, the No. 1 item on their list is prescription drug pricing. I continue to hear from my constituents in Texas who feel burdened, confused, and down-right frustrated by rising costs at the pharmacy. One of the reasons why I think that is probably true is that under the Affordable Care Act deductibles have risen and copays have ballooned, such that consumers are now paying more out of pocket for their prescription drugs than ever before, because from all of the negotiated deals between the pharmaceutical manufacturers and the prescription pharmacy benefit managers, none of that savings directly goes into the pocket of the consumer. So with increased deductibles and with expanded copays, my constituents, and, I dare say, all of our constituents are feeling more of that coming out of their pocket.

Medications that people have been taking for years just keep getting more and more expensive with no explanation behind the increase. To me, the No. 1 example of that is insulin. I support the role of our patent system to protect research and development of lifesaving and innovative drugs, that people get a period of exclusivity—the companies that bring them into the market—a period of exclusivity so they can recoup their sunk costs and perhaps even make a profit, but there is just simply no explanation for a drug like insulin, that has been on the market for so long, for people to see \$1,200 and higher copays, as we heard in the Senate Finance Committee hearing.

A mother talked about her young son who was leaving the nest, so to speak, but he was unable to meet the \$1,200 copay. He was deferring decisions in his life like buying a house and perhaps even getting married because of the burden of that copay. We must do better, particularly on drugs that have been on the market for a long, long time, like insulin, that are so important for treating conditions like diabetes.

But perhaps the single most—well, it is really the most common concern I hear about is a drug called HUMIRA, and that is perhaps because it is the most widely prescribed drug in the world. This drug is a miracle drug, to be sure. It treats arthritis and a number of other immunodeficiency conditions, and it has been available for 15 years.

Now, you typically think of an expensive drug as being one, as I said, freshly on the market, which has just completed costly research and development, but a drug that has been around 15 years, can it be still protected by those patents, even though it was supposed to expire years earlier? Well, apparently, it can.

Smart lawyers with pharmaceutical manufacturers have figured a way to impose what is known as patent thickets. In other words, they can request and get issued so many different pat-

ents that they literally can prolong the period in which a drug manufacturer can claim exclusive right to the sales of that drug.

AbbVie, the company that makes HUMIRA, has figured this out. They figured out how to game the patent system so that no competition ever comes to market, and they remain the sole provider of this widely used drug. Their playbook involves an intricate maze of overlapping patents, which make it nearly impossible for a competitor to come to market.

Here is the best evidence of that. Today there are five companies that compete with HUMIRA in Europe, but all are blocked from their competing drugs being sold here in America until 2023. That is as a result of this patent thicketing gamesmanship. The smart lawyers at AbbVie have effectively found loopholes that allow them to create and maintain a monopoly.

Unfortunately, this isn't the only example of anticompetitive behavior in the pharmaceutical industry. A number of my constituents have also told me about their experience with a drug called Namenda, which is used by patients with Alzheimer's, a devastating disease. Like other new drugs, it began with an exclusivity period, where they were the sole provider, but when that period was coming to a close, the drugmaker switched from a twice-daily to a once-daily dose. Believe it or not, that triggers a new patent application. That move itself prevented pharmacists from being able to switch patients to a lower cost generic, even though it is just as effective, so the company could continue to reap enormous profits basically by just changing from twice-a-day to once-a-day application.

The enemy here is not our patent system. It is the abuse of the patent system by some pharmaceutical companies—again, not all pharmaceutical companies—but some in ways that directly harm the people we represent, the American people.

Earlier this year, I introduced a bill with my friend, the Democratic Senator from Connecticut, RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, to take aim at some of these corrupt practices. Our bill strikes the delicate balance between protecting innovation while increasing competition, and when it passes, it will be a win for every American who has felt the pain of sticker shock at the pharmacy.

We know it takes a lot more than good policy to get a bill turned into law around here. It takes bipartisan support. It takes broad consensus support to get the green light from the appropriate committees and to pass them through both Houses of the Senate. Well, you would think a bill like this that is bipartisan, has broad support, passed unanimously out of the Judiciary Committee, and reduces Federal spending would be a piece of cake to

pass, but they haven't been in the Senate during this period of our divisiveness.

The senior Senator from New York, the Democratic leader, has refused to let this bill pass without a Broadway-scale production of other unrelated legislation. Back in November, I came to the floor to ask that this bill be passed by unanimous consent—again, since it had passed unanimously out of the Judiciary Committee, and we had hotlined the bill to see if there were any other objections in the Senate and found none.

Well, in the month that followed, after the senior Senator from New York objected to passing that bill, I didn't hear a single word from the Senator who had concerns about it, but when I came to the floor to ask that the bill be passed again, the senior Senator from New York, the Democratic leader, blocked it again. He doesn't think it is bad policy. In fact, he admitted it is a good bill. He is not objecting to it because it is somehow a partisan bill that hasn't gone through the regular order or would increase the national debt. As I said, none of these things are true of this legislation.

The only reason the senior Senator from New York, the Democratic leader, objected to this bill is because he is engaging in the kind of politics and gamesmanship that really gives Washington, DC, a bad name. It is true that my name, like a third of the Senators' names, will be on the ballot in November, and Senator SCHUMER, apparently, is willing to punish his constituents in New York State by not allowing this bill to pass because he wants to make sure that nobody whose name is on the ballot, who happens to be a Republican, can claim any sort of advantage by getting a win, legislatively.

Well, unfortunately, while he is playing those sort of politics and games, his own constituents are being harmed, and the American people are being deprived of the benefits of this bipartisan legislation. We saw this mentality during the President's impeachment trial too. We saw how the Democratic leader staged vote after vote—not because he felt like he had a shot at getting a conviction of President Trump and a removal but strictly to make Senators whose names were going to be on the ballot in 2020 look bad. He wanted to get the best 30-second TV spot he could possibly get against all Republican Senators running in 2020.

He knew he was going to lose on the main impeachment vote, so he focused on the one thing that has eluded him for many years, and that is, his aspiration to become the next majority leader. Now, in his bid to become the next majority leader, our colleague from New York is blocking a bill that would bring down drug prices not only in the State of Texas but in New York as well and every other State around the country.

I wonder what the Senator's constituents in New York are telling him

about blocking bipartisan legislation that would actually benefit them. This is at the same time that they are trying to figure out how do they pay the higher copay or deductible for their prescriptions at the pharmacy. We are not even a month and a half into the new year, and drug prices are already on the rise, with an average increase of 6 percent. HUMIRA, which I mentioned earlier, has already gone up 7.4 percent.

So it is clear to me that this problem is not going to go away, and the time to act is now. I would encourage the Democratic leader to stop blocking the bill that his conference Member Senator BLUMENTHAL of Connecticut and I have introduced, so we can address these rising costs and provide some much needed relief for our constituents.

My constituents have asked me: What does Congress intend to do between now and the election? I usually mention: Well, we can deal with the prescription drugs, and we can help bring down the out-of-pocket costs. Hopefully, we can pass a highway infrastructure bill that we are working on, one that passed unanimously out of the Environment and Public Works Committee under the leadership of Senators BARRASSO and CARPER, but the third thing I think we ought to be able to do—and really it is a shame it has taken this long to act—is we need to take actions to confront the rising healthcare risks associated with e-cigarettes.

E-CIGARETTES

In December, I visited the University of North Texas Health Science Center in Fort Worth to learn more about the danger of e-cigarettes, particularly among adolescents. I heard from a young Texan named Anna Carey, who used to be among the many students at her high school using e-cigarettes. Like so many young people across the country, she became addicted. That is the point. E-cigarettes are not harmless. They deliver nicotine, which is an addictive drug, into your body, and that is the point of the e-cigarette.

The one advantage it does have over tobacco is you don't have to burn it, which also produces carcinogenic by-products of combustion, but like so many people in the country, Anna became addicted, and it didn't take her long to experience severe health consequences as a result of the use of this product.

The once active 16-year-old became extremely lethargic and would experience random and severe chest pain. Eventually, she was admitted to Cook Children's Hospital in Fort Worth and diagnosed with chemical-induced pneumonia in both her lungs. She said that was her wake-up call. Anna quit using e-cigarettes, and I am glad to report she has made a full recovery. Others have not been so lucky.

She now shares her story in an effort to raise awareness and prevent other young people her age from going down the same path, but we can't let young

people like Anna lead this fight alone. We need to do more in Washington to do our job. This has been a high priority for Members on both sides of the aisle. One of our colleagues on the HELP Committee, the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, continues to work to address this health challenge.

The most effective way to prevent adolescents from facing the harmful consequences of these devices is to stop them from getting addicted in the first place. A recent survey found that one-third of underage e-cigarette users bought them over the internet, where it is easy to skirt the age requirements. That has to change. It has already changed for tobacco. We just want to apply the same standard to e-cigarettes.

I have introduced a bill with the Senator from California, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, to protect our children from becoming addicted to the nicotine produced by e-cigarettes, and I hope we will be able to make progress on this legislation soon.

As I said, e-cigarettes and tobacco are on totally different playing fields when it comes to online purchases. For traditional cigarettes, there are clear guardrails in place to prevent minors from using online purchases to skirt the age requirements. At the time of delivery, the buyer has to sign and show an ID proving their age, which just makes sense. You are required to show an ID when you purchase cigarettes at a gas station or convenience store, and online purchases should be the same, but in the case of e-cigarettes, it is different. Anyone, no matter how old or young, can go online and buy e-cigarettes and have them delivered to their front door without the legal requirement of an ID, and you better believe that too many young people are taking advantage of that loophole without really fully understanding the dangers they are subjecting themselves to.

A recent survey found that about one-third of underage e-cigarette users bought them online. This legislation would change that. It wouldn't add additional requirements. It would simply apply the same requirements for the online sale of traditional cigarettes to e-cigarettes.

As I said, this bill has broad bipartisan support, as you think it would. So I am hopeful we can pass it and get it to the President's desk soon so we can address this wave of addiction among our young people.

With impeachment in the rearview mirror, I hope the Senate will come together and cross these critical items off of our to-do list. Our constituents, the American people, will benefit.

We have a lot of work to do and a lot of work we can and should get done between now and the election in November, so I hope we will be able to make some progress.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.