

Rather than chase trends, he prioritized tone and careful craftsmanship. That commitment helped the company remain a standard for artists who value instruments built with care and character.

Gretsch Drums has reached stages large and small and remains a trusted choice for professionals and young musicians beginning their journey.

This milestone reflects decades of determination and stewardship for Mr. Gretsch and those who have worked beside him.

Today, we recognize Fred Gretsch for his influence on American music and for protecting the legacy that continues to inspire.

HONORING CLARA LEE PHILLIPS

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

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Clara Lee Phillips, a cherished member of the Albany community and a woman whose dedication and service strengthened the very heart of New York's 20th Congressional District.

Born in Langsdale, Mississippi, Clara made Albany her home in 1964 and devoted 36 years of faithful service to Albany Medical Center.

Even after retirement, she continued giving back, volunteering, cooking, and supporting the youth of the South End with unwavering dedication.

Miss Clara, as she was affectionately known, was the founder of Mississippi Day in Albany, a celebration now in its 13th year. What began as her way of sharing a piece of home grew into a cherished community tradition, uniting neighbors through food, music, culture, and, yes, storytelling.

On behalf of the 20th Congressional District, I extend our deepest condolences to Miss Clara's family, her church community, and the countless friends and neighbors whose lives she touched. Her legacy of service, unity, and love will endure in Albany for years to come.

We honor her today with gratitude and commit to carrying forward that great spirit that she brought to our district every single day.

We thank Miss Clara.

DRILLING DOWN ON ENERGY COSTS

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, affordability is a buzzword these days. Let's drill down, so to speak, on energy costs.

My home State of California is the producer of a great amount of our awesome ag products, our fruits, vegetables, tree, and nut crops.

What we are about to see in California is two different refineries are

slated to close: Phillips 66 in the south and Valero up north. Those two refineries are approximately 20 percent of the fuel supply for the State. Also, California's refinery capacity affects Nevada and Arizona as they are right next door, and part of the shipment of our oil products goes there.

We are on schedule to see these closed down because they can't afford to do business in my home State anymore. The rest of the country, under the awesome energy policy we have had for about the last 11 months, have seen prices come down. I have seen in Colorado two different times the \$1.85 range. California is still about \$4.50, and it is going to continue to go up when there is less capacity and when the pipeline shuts down.

We need energy affordability.

□ 1920

ACA PREMIUM TAX CREDIT EXPIRATION

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

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, Congress has the opportunity to save Christmas.

As millions across the country face the uncertainty and anxiety about their health coverage, without congressional action, the enhanced premium tax credits under the Affordable Care Act will soon expire, leading to higher costs and risking healthcare coverage for some altogether.

It will force families off health plans and add to the burden on our rural health centers with unpaid care that they are already experiencing at the time that Members of Congress prepare to go home for Christmas to their families with the certainty of their own coverage. It is just not right.

There are bipartisan proposals to address this crisis, and I thank my colleagues who have been working around the clock to find a solution and who have not lost sight of why our constituents have sent us here: to work for them, to work for solutions.

One of the greatest gifts Congress can give to families back home is accountability and coverage.

HEALTHCARE AFFORDABILITY CRISIS

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Ms. MCCLELLAN of Virginia was recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.)

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. MCCLELLAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include any extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Ms. MCCLELLAN. Mr. Speaker, we have 4 legislative days left in 2025, 17 days total.

This is our last chance to prevent 22 million people from seeing their insurance premiums double or even triple and for some to see their health insurance premium spike beyond their ability to pay when the enhanced premium tax credits expire on December 31.

An estimated 5 million people will find that they can no longer afford those premiums and will lose their coverage altogether.

For the past month, the Congressional Black Caucus has told stories on this floor of our constituents who will be impacted by this body's failure to act. These include restaurant owners, beauticians, barbers, landscapers, florists, mediators, chiropractors, funeral directors, farmers, small business owners and their employees, gig workers, the self-employed, and more.

We have told stories of people worried about how they are going to pay that unexpected bill if they get sick or injured or if they lose their health insurance. We have 4 days to prevent that from happening.

Last week the Senate failed to act. The administration doesn't even seem to have a concept of a plan, so it is up to the House. Leader JEFFRIES has the discharge petition open right now to extend the credits, and we need just four Republicans to sign on.

Last week Punchbowl News reported that Speaker JOHNSON is planning a long process to fix healthcare, saying he anticipates working on healthcare through the second quarter of next year. However, open enrollment ends on January 15, 1 month from today, and those new premiums will take effect on January 1, in 17 days.

Mr. Speaker, do you know who can't wait for the Speaker's process?

It is my constituent Lester Johnson, co-owner, with his wife, of Mama J's Restaurant. They and their daughter rely on the Affordable Care Act paying about \$700 a month for their premiums in 2025. However, without the enhanced premium tax credits, their bill is going to go up to more than \$1,400 a month, and many of his roughly 40 employees are going to see their premiums spike, as well.

It is a lot of money for people, Lester said, and not knowing what the price is going to be because of a stalemate in Congress adds uncertainty. Everybody is feeling the anxiety.

Lester is not sure what he is going to do. I have told stories of constituents in Virginia who found a plan they could afford but with higher deductibles. They are worried. They say they are just going to wrap themselves in bubble wrap and hold their breath.

Bubble wrap doesn't help you, Mr. Speaker, if you are in a car accident. Bubble wrap doesn't help you, Mr. Speaker, when you get sick. Bubble wrap doesn't help you, Mr. Speaker, if

you end up going into premature labor and have to pay an average of \$70,000 a day for a NICU stay.

Rather than addressing this premium cliff, House Republicans have put forth a reckless plan that will put millions more Americans' healthcare coverage at risk. This new bill does nothing to lower costs for millions of Americans who are now facing skyrocketing healthcare premiums.

The bill is full of recycled failed ideas from previous efforts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. It fails to extend vital enhanced premium tax credits, forcing more than 22 million Americans to pay, on average, twice as much to buy the same health coverage they have today.

As I said, an estimated 4 to 5 million could become entirely uninsured, and everybody else will pay higher healthcare costs.

This proposal increases premiums for millions of Americans by funding cost-sharing reductions, causing hundreds of thousands of people to become uninsured. It expands so-called association health plans that put comprehensive and affordable care for small businesses and workers at risk. This has been the centerpiece of Republican attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act for decades.

It doesn't work.

The plan also creates a backdoor ban on abortion and reproductive healthcare.

Republicans have shown they have no agenda to address healthcare affordability and access. As Americans stare down notices that their healthcare costs will increase by tens of thousands of dollars in just 2 weeks, Republicans are cramming through legislation that kicks them while they are down.

Americans will suffer without the Affordable Care Act enhanced premium tax credits, and yet Republicans still haven't put forward a clean plan that will provide relief. Instead, they are putting on political theater with an unserious vote on an amendment that will undermine the ACA that their leadership intends to see fail.

This eleventh hour, half-baked plan isn't even feasible to implement. Earlier this year, Democrats urged Republicans to extend the tax credits fearing for those Americans whose costs were about to skyrocket. Instead, Republicans spent their time cutting \$1 trillion from the healthcare system while Americans began receiving their notices that their healthcare premiums would skyrocket and Republicans stood idly by.

Now we are just 2 weeks away from the expiration of these tax credits, and this half-baked plan isn't going to cut it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. CARTER).

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her leadership in these Special Order hours.

Mr. Speaker, as we talk about the human costs of expiring healthcare tax

credits, these human costs are not just on Democrats. These human costs are on Americans across the board, Republicans and Democrats alike. They are the small business owners who are the backbone, as we often say, of our economy. Yet when given an opportunity to demonstrate to our small business owners that they really matter and that their employees really matter, we play politics.

Today, I want to share the story of Mike Friedman. I met Mike in October, about 1 week before open enrollment began. He was working on a Federal contract at the USDA National Finance Center in New Orleans but lost his job in April because of Federal workforce cuts enacted by Trump, Musk, and DOGE.

His family signed up for insurance through the Affordable Care Act because his husband was also laid off in the spring. Mike had cancer 5 years ago and continues to have outstanding health concerns.

□ 1930

If MAGA Republicans don't join Democrats in extending the ACA tax credit, Mike doesn't know how he or his family will afford healthcare. He told me: I am not unusual in this case. So many others are in the exact same position. He said: I am in the cusp between being retired and not being eligible for Medicare yet. He just turned 61, and the ACA is the only option for his family.

The cost of healthcare is out of control. Republicans have turned the situation into a crisis with the largest Medicaid cut in the history, outrageous threats to Medicare, and relentless targeting of the Affordable Care Act.

This big, pretty some may say, most would say ugly law will hurt Americans of every party, of every background, of every ZIP Code. For 43 days, the Congressional Black Caucus stood firm to protect America's healthcare and lower healthcare costs for people like Mike and so many others that will remain nameless and faceless because they don't always have a voice or a platform from which to plead their case. That is why we are here, for those who may not have a voice, may not have a platform, may not have a lobby, may not have a group to fight for them. We are fighting for them every single day regardless of their name, background, even party because when we are elected to Congress, we are not elected to only represent those who are in our party, but to represent the American people.

This healthcare crisis is an affront to the American people, and I implore my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to do the right thing. Do the right thing. Step up, stand out, fight against injustice and inequality wherever you find it. Demonstrate that to our small business people, our people living with disabilities, our veterans, our working people who go to work every single day who make just a little bit too much

money to access Medicaid, but not enough money to pay for their healthcare.

Republicans' failure to extend the ACA tax credits will hurt Louisianians and Americans across this country. It allows premiums to skyrocket for tens of millions of Americans by an average of 114 percent and takes away coverage from around 4 million people.

That is unacceptable by every front. Any way you slice it, it is unacceptable. We are the richest country in the world. This Nation has more than anyone else in the entire world. No one should go to bed hungry. No one should be without a home. No one should fear being sick because they can't access healthcare, not in America.

This is not a partisan issue, my friends. There are a lot of things that we can be partisan about. This isn't one. We only have a few days left to get this right. Let's not let the American people be the sacrificial lamb over some undisputed political battle among parties. Let's not let a person in the White House who seems to care about everything but the American people dictate or drive our actions. We are bigger, we are better. I know you personally. Find the courage to do the right thing. Stand up for the nearly 4 million people who will find themselves without healthcare.

The Congressional Black Caucus is here, and we are not giving up this fight. We will not give up the fight to address the healthcare crisis in our country. We will not give up the fight to fight for those businesspeople who every day create tax dollars and sales taxes for our local governments, that hire people from the community, that provide the resources that keep our economy going. Let's demonstrate to them that they matter. Let's do the right thing. Let's extend the ACA tax credits and show America that we can get our business done and that everything we do is not subject to a red or a blue.

Ms. McCLELLAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. CARTER for his remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I wasn't here when the Affordable Care Act was passed. I was in the State legislature in Virginia. It was after I had become a mother. It was while I was part of the sandwich generation, trying to raise two children and deal with elderly parents nearing the end of their lives. It was while I spent a lot of time trying to figure out how we were going to close the insurance gap so that no one would face a couple of scenarios that I was lucky enough to have health insurance to cover, but a lot of people don't.

The first was when my son was almost 3 years old, and in the blink of an eye he grabbed my curling iron and burned his hand. We were in a rural community in Virginia whose hospital didn't have a burn unit. It was very small. They couldn't even figure out what degree the burn was. This was on a Saturday.

They said: You can either go home—and on Wednesday there is a burn clinic where they can look at his hand for free—or we can see if the VCU Health center can admit him today. I said: Well, he is going to get admitted today because I knew I had health insurance, and whatever that bill was going to be, I didn't have to worry about it.

If I didn't have health insurance, I would have been forced to wait until Wednesday to go to the clinic, and his hand probably would have been infected.

After a 3-hour ambulance ride, a week in the burn unit, and all the medication, the bill was \$15,000. In the blink of an eye, my son's injury cost \$15,000. However, I was lucky because I had health insurance, so I only had to pay \$1,000. I was lucky I had the ability to pay that.

At the time, we were trying to figure out should Virginia expand Medicaid to help people who can't afford health insurance get it. We were able to expand it on a bipartisan basis because in our rural areas, they understood Medicaid expansion was critical to keeping their hospitals open. Over 300,000 Virginians got health insurance because of that.

Now, those 300,000 Virginians face the prospect of losing their health insurance because of actions Congress took in July with the largest Medicaid cut in American history. In our rural areas, six hospitals in Virginia are at risk of closing because of those Medicaid cuts, one in my district that is a healthcare safety net. The closest hospital if they close is over an hour away.

We also created our own State-based healthcare exchange, and 573,000 Virginians signed up. Many of them now face the prospect they won't be able to afford their premiums when their tax credits expire in 17 days.

This is all in the context of folks seeing their housing costs increase, whether it is rent or mortgage, their energy bills increase, childcare increase. A lot of folks are facing the prospect that they cannot pay their rent and their health insurance, so they are playing the lottery, figuratively: The lottery that they won't get sick or the lottery they won't get injured. When they do, whether they are insured or not, they are showing up at the hospital, and the rest of us will pay the cost.

□ 1940

Mr. Speaker, as we enter the holiday season, as a preacher's kid, I have been thinking a lot about Matthew 25:31-40, where Jesus said: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father." He said when He enters into his kingdom, all the nations will come, and He will say: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and

you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' When did we do this? And He said: 'Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for Me.'"

Mr. Speaker, I came to Congress looking to do for the least of these as well as every American, but Congress' priorities this year have not been that.

Congress bent over backward, congressional Republicans specifically, bent over backward to provide permanent tax breaks for people who make over \$500,000 a year, but if you make \$64,000 a year, or a family of four that makes \$129,000 a year, you are just expected to absorb health insurance premiums that double or triple.

If you make \$21,597 a year, or a family of four who makes \$44,000 to \$45,000 a year, you are supposed to absorb your healthcare costs if you lose access to Medicaid. That is upside down, and what we are saying is to the least of these, you are on your own. They deserve better.

We have 4 days to try to prevent millions of Americans from losing access to health insurance. Are we going to do it? Time will tell. I still have hope, but we will see.

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

DISMANTLING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Mrs. HAYES of Connecticut was recognized for 30 minutes.)

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of the Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Connecticut?

There was no objection.

Mrs. HAYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a member of the Committee on Education and Workforce, a teacher, and a parent to lead this Special Order hour on the systemic dismantling of the Department of Education.

From the beginning, the Trump administration and Secretary Linda McMahon have been ruthless in attacking the Department that is dedicated to ensuring equal access to quality education, promoting student achievement, preparing students for global competitiveness, administering Federal funds, enforcing civil rights, collecting data, conducting research, and supporting educational programs from early childhood to higher education.

On March 11, the Department of Education initiated a reduction in force affecting nearly 50 percent of its workforce. Only 2,200 employees of the 4,000 employees that used to work at the Department remain to protect the civil rights of students, to support students from low-income backgrounds, to develop and prepare educators, and to provide resources for English language learners.

President Trump also signed an executive order directing the Secretary of Education to facilitate the closure of the Department of Education. This action by the President is illegal.

The Department of Education was created by an act of Congress, and only Congress has the authority to close that agency or any other Federal agency it creates. Yet, the executive order was one of many attacks by the President to collapse Federal agencies and end necessary services to the American people.

Last month, the Department of Education announced six new interagency agreements to shift the day-to-day functions to four other agencies. This, I have to say, is one of the most devastating actions yet.

This agreement sends the American Indian and Tribal colleges to the Department of the Interior. It sends TRIO programs to the Department of Labor. It sends the Child Care Access Means Parents in School program to the Department of Health and Human Services and International Education and Foreign Language Studies to the Department of State. These Departments do not have the expertise or appropriate staff to administer these programs, and our students will eventually suffer.

Since its creation in 1979, the Department of Education has been committed to ensuring high-quality education for the 49 million children who attend public schools across the country.

The Department of Education also collects and publishes data on student enrollment, school staffing, and crime in schools, and distributes Federal funds to support programs for 7.5 million students with special needs. We haven't heard any examples or any information on how these programs will run when being administered across several different agencies.

When my Republican colleagues say they want to dismantle the Department, what they are really saying is they want to eliminate the sole Federal agency that protects the civil rights of students, the sole Federal agency that supports students from low-income backgrounds and develops and prepares educators. For postsecondary students, the Department administers Pell grants and \$1.6 million in Federal student aid programs to support those trying to afford college.

This Department has long been a target of Republican lawmakers who make the false claims about the role of the Department of Education. I know with fidelity that the Department of