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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our Father in Heaven, light of the world, give the Members of this body Your light. Shine Your light to help them see the truth. Shine Your light so that they can see the path You desire them to travel. Shine Your light so that they can see themselves as they truly are and not take for granted the freedoms they enjoy.

Lord, shine Your light so that they may live expectantly, open for what You will do or give. Shine Your light so that they may see You in all Your majesty and love. Fill this Chamber with the light of Your presence, enabling each Senator to discern and do Your will. We pray in Your radiant Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUDD). The Chair lays before the Senate a communication from the Secretary of the Senate regarding a message from the President received during the adjournment of the Senate.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: On Friday, March 28, 2025, the President of the United States sent by messenger the attached sealed envelope addressed to the President of the Senate said

to contain a message from the President on the Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to South Sudan. The Senate not being in session on the day which the President delivered this message, I accepted the message at 1:17 p.m., and I now present to you the President's message, with the accompanying papers, for disposition by the Senate.

Respectfully,

JACKIE BARBER,
Secretary of the Senate.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Matthew Whitaker, of Iowa, to be United States Permanent Representative on the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

(The remarks of Mr. GRASSLEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 1206 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. GRASSLEY. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, at this point, Congress is in the midst of an important duty: crafting a budget resolution. The resolution is a framework that will guide Federal spending over the next 10 years and ensure that the United States can fulfill its financial commitments and its priorities.

But under the direction of President Trump, congressional Republicans are using this moment as an opportunity to make cuts that hurt working families and repurpose the savings to pay for tax breaks for the wealthiest people in America.

And what is the most egregious example of this? The Republican plan to slash health coverage for millions of Americans who rely on Medicaid.

House Republicans have proposed \$880 billion in cuts to the Medicaid Program in order to pay for Trump's tax cuts for billionaires, and Senate Republicans have similarly put this program in the crosshairs. Why? Not because they want to lower healthcare costs to improve our healthcare system but because they want to use Medicaid cuts as a source of revenue for tax breaks for billionaires.

The richest man on Earth, Elon Musk, can dance around a stage with a chain saw, cheering cuts to basic healthcare programs, but let me explain to you what that really means for working families. Medicaid covers 30 million children in America, nearly half of all our kids, 60 percent of seniors in nursing homes, and it is the largest funder of addiction and mental health treatment.

Let's zero down on that statement: Thirty million kids, half of all the kids in America, rely on Medicaid for basic health coverage. And if you have a parent or a grandparent in a nursing home or assisted living, 60 percent of them rely on Medicaid to pay for it. What happens to the family of the parent or grandparent if Medicaid isn't there? Bet you know the answer. The family

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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has to pay for it or mom can't go where you think the best care is offered. That is what Medicaid is all about, 60 percent of folks in nursing homes, and it is the largest funder of addiction and mental health treatment.

How many times have we said that we are so enlightened these days, unlike previous years, that we talk honestly about mental illness and dealing with it? My family, like most families, had a history of mental illness, but it was a deepest and darkest secret. Now we are open about it, and thank goodness we are because it is an illness—it is not a curse—and an illness that can be treated if you can pay for it.

Medicaid pays for more mental health counseling than any other source. And when it comes to narcotics addiction, we talk about fentanyl, we talk about heroin, all these different narcotics, and God forbid, any family has to face that, but if they do, where do they turn for counseling?

It turns out, the biggest source of counseling from narcotics addiction is paid for by Medicaid. So if you cut down the coverage of Medicaid, you reduce the likelihood of good professional care for people who are suffering from mental illness, addiction, or other serious medical problems.

In Illinois, 3.4 million people are enrolled in Medicaid, including 1.5 million children. Under Republican plans to dramatically cut the Medicaid Program, 775,000 adults who gained health insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act would lose coverage almost overnight.

When I think back to things that I have been part of as a U.S. Senator from Illinois, I am particularly gratified to remember when we passed the Affordable Care Act. Too many Americans at that time had no health insurance coverage.

I found myself stuck in that situation as a law student here in Georgetown many, many years ago. My wife and I were blessed with a little baby girl that was born with a serious health problem, and we had no health insurance.

So where did I go? I went over to the Children's Hospital in this town with my wife and baby and waited in what they called the charity ward for the opportunity to see some doctor—any doctor—that might be able to treat my little girl.

I never felt more worthless as a parent without health insurance with a sick little child. It is a terrible feeling. I have never forgotten it to this day. I wouldn't wish it on anybody.

And I certainly wouldn't take health insurance away from somebody who couldn't afford it otherwise in order to give a bigger tax cut to a wealthier person. I want to help working families, that is for sure, but tax cuts for Elon Musk—come on, he doesn't need it. He wouldn't even notice it. What we ought to be focusing on is that family and their needs.

And for other children, elderly, and disabled Illinoisans who depend on

Medicaid may no longer be able to access lifesaving medical treatment with the cutbacks that are being proposed.

The Republicans are ignoring another obvious point. Medicaid is the absolute lifeline for children's hospitals and rural hospitals in their communities.

You pick a State, in Illinois, 60 percent of our 102 counties are classified as rural, smalltown America. Rural hospitals are the backbone of communities in downstate Illinois. Rural hospitals anchor the local economy. They often are the largest employer in town, in the county, sometimes. And they are critical access points for healthcare.

If you suffer a farm accident or face a complication with a birth in your family, you can't afford to drive that extra hour or two to find the nearest hospital.

That is why I worked for years to improve access to healthcare in rural areas, working to strengthen rural hospitals and recruit more doctors, dentists, and nurses. But rural hospitals in Illinois and across this country could be at risk of closure if Republicans put Medicaid on the chopping block.

Last week, I had a series of press conferences back in my State. I first went to Taylorville, in Central Illinois, and then down to Cahokia Heights, near the St. Louis area, and met with hospital administrators who told the story: They didn't know whether they could keep the doors open if the cutbacks proposed by the House Republicans go through. It will be a cutback that they feel personally.

Already, half of rural hospitals in America operate in the red. They are not getting by with current reimbursement, and with even less, fewer hospitals will be available. For many rural hospitals, Medicaid covers a large percentage of their patients and accounts for a large portion of the hospital's budget.

For HSHS St. Francis Hospital in Litchfield, IL, Medicaid pays for 53 percent of all hospitalizations. For OSF St. Clare Hospital in Princeton, IL, Medicaid pays for 45 percent of all hospitalizations. It is 22 percent for Jersey Community Hospital in Jerseyville, IL. And the list goes on and on.

And it isn't just rural, smalltown areas affected by these Medicaid cuts. It also goes to the inner city. Hospitals struggling to survive won't be able to.

So do you see the picture here? Cuts to Medicaid put rural hospitals and inner-city hospitals in danger. And if rural hospitals close because of Republican budget cuts, communities will suffer, and families will suffer. Children seeking cancer treatments won't be able to access local care when they need it. Pregnant women will have to drive further to deliver their babies. And your grandparent will have to wait months to get in to see that diabetes specialist.

Of course, Americans of all political affiliations rely on Medicaid, and, increasingly, Republican Members of

Congress are recognizing how unpopular it is going to be to cut Medicaid to pay for tax breaks for the wealthy.

Senator TOMMY TUBERVILLE of Alabama acknowledged in an interview that cutting Medicaid would "decimate" his home State of Alabama, where three out of five kids are on Medicaid. He then said that Congress has to find a way around cutting it.

Senator ROGER MARSHALL of Kansas similarly expressed his support for Medicaid, saying that, rather than cutting it, "we will try to strengthen Medicaid for the future of all those who need it the most, the most vulnerable." And Senator MARSHALL, of course, is a medical doctor.

Slashing lifesaving healthcare will hurt Americans in blue and red States. I hope my Republican colleagues will not cave in to the President's pressure and legislate away the health and well-being of the people they represent. If Republicans push forward with their cruel and unpopular funding plan, working families will lose, and a handful of billionaires will win. It is simple and devastating math.

It is not too late. As we consider the budget resolution, as soon as this week, Congress has the ability to do the right thing and protect Medicaid from cuts in our Federal budget.

The numbers in Congress make the difference. In the U.S. Senate, of 100 Members, there are 53 Republicans and 47 Democrats. When it comes to these budget decisions, three Republicans moving over to vote with Democrats to save Medicaid can save and keep open these hospitals I have talked about, can give these kids access to healthcare, can help families pay for mom's and their grandmother's nursing care, can make sure that we have counseling for mental health and addiction.

Three Republicans—that is all it takes. We hope that they will listen to the people they represent, carefully.

I have. I think it is clear.

Medicaid is a popular program. Over 80 percent of the American people reject the idea that we should cut Medicaid—over 80 percent. That goes way beyond any single party. They understand that this gets down to the basics.

How would you like to be sitting in that waiting room with no health insurance, at a hospital far from your home, hoping that your child is going to survive?

Stick with the families of this country. The billionaires will take care of themselves.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.