

I want to agree with the basic premise that, if there is inappropriate spending, fix it. But that is not what is happening here, and I think the Republican majority knows it.

The Congressional Budget Office called their bluff and confirmed that these Medicaid cuts proposed by the Republicans are not about waste or efficiency. They are about restricting access to coverage to patients all across the United States, including in my State of Illinois.

Under Republicans' watch, CBO stated that 13.7 million Americans will have their health insurance coverage terminated. Almost 14 million Americans will lose healthcare coverage if the Republicans go forward with their plan. What is the acceptable number of constituents losing health coverage for Republicans?

Nationwide, half of all rural hospitals are already in the red, and more than 300 rural hospitals are facing immediate closure, including 26 in Kansas, 22 in Alabama, 21 in Texas, and 9 in Missouri. How many rural hospitals closing in their States are Republicans willing to accept to help perpetuate tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans?

Let me tell you, as a person from downstate Illinois, rural hospitals are the backbone of the community. Not only are they critical places for emergency medical care, but they are the anchors of the local economy.

Speaking of the economy, one of the ways Republicans plan to cut Medicaid is by imposing burdensome, redtape requirements.

Put paperwork in the path of an individual looking for medical care. Pile it up. Make it hard. Pitched by the Republicans as just simply "work requirements," this policy withholds healthcare for eligible patients until they meet overly complex paperwork requirements. It is a failing strategy.

In the States that have tried the so-called work requirements, there has been no increase in employment. The only impact is with patients who are ruled ineligible and kicked off Medicaid because they were drowning in paperwork. What a way to run a country.

Here is an example: A waitress with diabetes misses a paperwork deadline because the forms were sent to her old address. She loses her Medicaid coverage and can't access her medications and is forced to miss work to deal with it.

One analysis determined that approximately 3 million manufacturing, agricultural, and service sector workers could become uninsured under the simply "Make sure they are going to work" plan. Who thinks that is a good idea?

Yesterday, House Republicans spent Mother's Day scheming on how to advance these Medicaid cuts, finally releasing a copy of their legislation so we could see the detail. It is as catastrophic as we feared. It is the largest cut in Medicaid in the Nation's health

history, ripping health insurance away from millions of Americans in every single State.

But it is not too late for a few Republicans—and it only takes a few: four in the House, four in the Senate—to step up and say they don't want to be part of this, if they will stand up and say: No, we will not risk the healthcare for millions of Americans as bargaining chips for billionaire tax breaks.

Medicaid provides health insurance for 1 out of every 4 people in my State of Illinois—3.4 million people, including 1.5 million children. Medicaid pays to deliver half of all the babies in my State—half of them. Two-thirds of the seniors in nursing homes depend on Medicaid. If Medicaid is not helping to pay for that nursing home or care for seniors, what is going to happen to grandma, grandfathers, those that are affected by it? It is the largest funder of opioid addiction treatment.

Remember the image of Elon Musk—the richest man in the world—laughing gleefully as he danced around a stage with a chain saw in his hand? The richest man in the world was laughing out loud about his chain saw cuts to Medicaid. Well, these cuts are no laughing matter for that rural hospital worried about having to close its mental health services. They are no laughing matter for the pregnant woman forced to drive more than an hour to deliver a baby because the local hospital shuttered its obstetrics unit.

Wipe that smile off your face, Mr. Musk. We are talking about life-and-death healthcare for America's working families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BRITT). The Senator from Texas.

#### UKRAINE

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, America is an exceptional nation: freedom of religion, freedom of speech and of the press; private property rights; free and fair elections; the rule of law and an independent judiciary. All of these help make us exceptional, but we Americans often take this for granted because these principles, these values, are so ingrained in our way of life. That is who we are. But it also makes it more challenging for us to understand how different other countries may be from us. It shouldn't be a surprise, though, if you think about it. History, culture, economics all matter, but, sadly, this is a lesson that seems like we and others need to learn over and over again.

When it comes to Russia, it is worth recalling Churchill's description of the former Soviet Union. He called it a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma, but when it comes to negotiating peace in Ukraine, we might be tempted to assume that Vladimir Putin is working from the same playbook as other stakeholders. But that is simply not the case. The fundamental differences between Russia and the

West have become all that much more apparent in the negotiations to end the war in Ukraine. This is precisely what has made it such a difficult challenge to end the war, and that is what makes President Trump's efforts all that much more noble when we consider the monumental task that he is seeking to accomplish.

As I have said before—and I will say it again—I am grateful to President Trump for his leadership and his efforts to end the conflict that has lasted far too long—for more than 3 years now. During his first 100 days, President Trump has done more than President Biden did in 4 years. He has made clear to the Europeans that they need to step up and assume greater ownership of their continental security, and he successfully persuaded them to increase their defense spending and enhance deterrents against future aggression.

The President's representatives have led several rounds of negotiations between the Ukrainians and the Russians—something that President Biden did not even attempt—and President Trump has secured a key critical minerals deal with Ukraine, which will help fund the reconstruction of that country. It will help compensate America for its investments in Ukraine's defense and dissuade future Russian aggression.

But there is one significant obstacle in achieving a lasting end to this conflict, and that, of course, is Vladimir Putin.

Succinctly stated, Vladimir Putin's Russia is a police state. In Russia, people who buck the government mysteriously disappear or fall out of windows to their deaths or are poisoned, imprisoned, or die of suspect causes like Alexei Navalny. In Russia, the government targets religious minorities, imposing fines and criminal charges. In Russia, the government controls the media. Independent media outlets are censored, suppressed, or shuttered if they do not conform to the party line. Under Vladimir Putin, government redistributes private property based on political loyalties, giving rise to the oligarchs that we have heard so much about.

Then there are the alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Russia during its invasion of Ukraine. Take, for example, the bombing of Ukraine's civilian energy infrastructure during the first winter of Russia's full-scale invasion or consider the mass abduction of Ukrainian children. Thousands of Ukrainian children have been deported to Russia since the start of the full-scale invasion, with many having been adopted into Russian families or sent to camps, where they are subjected to ideological indoctrination designed to erase their Ukrainian identity.

The bombing of Ukraine's power grid, which was part of a state policy of widespread attacks on the civilian population, further illustrates the point.

One particular event in Bucha stands out. Russian troops intentionally massacred more than 400 civilians, apparently as part of a systematic clearing operation to secure their path to the capital, Kyiv. Russian paratroopers from the 234th Guards Air Assault Regiment interrogated and executed unarmed men of fighting age and killed people who unwittingly crossed their paths, whether it was children fleeing with their families or locals hoping to find groceries or people simply trying to get back home on their bicycles. The victims of this massacre were of all ages and professions. This massacre would be deemed a war crime under international humanitarian law, and because of their systematic and widespread nature, the killings in Bucha could also amount to crimes against humanity.

So the Russian Federation under Vladimir Putin is nothing like the United States or Europe, for that matter. Russia, of course, has its own history, culture, and form of government, and I said earlier, it can be easy for the West to assume, as we have done before, that our values are shared by other countries, but that is most decidedly not the case with Putin's Russia. Putin has made his unwillingness to end this unprovoked and barbaric war as plain as day. He has shown no remorse that his country is nearing 1 million casualties. He clearly doesn't care about the Russian people, who have been sacrificed to his fantasy of an empire restored, and his tolerance for casualties appears without limit.

In fact, Putin has done nothing to justify the hope that he might be persuaded to end this war. To the contrary, despite Putin's declared ceasefire over the Easter holiday, Russia then proceeded to launch attacks into Ukraine that killed innocent civilians. More recently, Russia launched two ballistic missiles and 165 drones, wounding 11 people, including 2 children.

One 54-year-old Kyiv resident, whose car caught fire during the attack, expressed frustration at the lack of progress for peace, saying:

They can't agree on anything, and we are the ones who suffer the consequences.

An 18-year-old student said:

People are just suffering all the time . . . It's still very hard to see our country constantly being destroyed.

President Trump noted in a statement on Truth Social:

There was no reason for Putin to be shooting missiles into civilian areas, cities and towns, over the last few days.

The President went on to suggest that Putin may not actually be trying to stop the war. I agree with President Trump. There is no indication he is trying to stop the war. Vladimir Putin is making a grave mistake in stringing the President of the United States and the rest of the world along while innocent lives are being taken.

In order to achieve peace, President Trump needs a good-faith partner both

in Ukrainian President Zelenskyy and Russian President Putin. Notably, while Zelenskyy has met with the President several times, most recently at the Vatican, Putin has not. Instead of working for peace, Putin recently threatened to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine in order to bring the war, in his own words, "to a logical conclusion with the outcome [that] Russia requires."

How does this relate to President Trump's peace efforts? Well, we should listen to Putin's own words. In a speech he delivered to the Russian Foreign Ministry last year, Putin argued that peace with Ukraine would require a removal of Ukrainian troops from the southern and eastern part of that country, the demilitarization and denuclearization of Ukraine, a neutral and non-NATO Ukraine, and the removal of all Western sanctions.

The hard reality is that Putin sees this conflict not just as a war between Russia and Ukraine but as a war between Russia and the West.

In this same speech, he says the West is primarily at fault for the conflict in the world today and that it was the West that incited a Ukrainian coup in 2014 and further unrest in Eastern Ukraine in 2022, which necessitated Russian military action to liberate the people of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. Putin says that the war would have ended long ago, in March 2022, had it not been for the West's supplying Ukraine with weapons and political support and extending the conflict.

Likewise, Putin sees Ukraine's prospective association with NATO or European peacekeeping forces as an inherent extension of Western imperialism, which he cannot tolerate. He even goes as far as to say that Russia could not accept a cease-fire since it would give time for Ukraine to rearm.

Finally, Putin shares a vision for a multipolar world to counter what he perceives as Western imperialism and Russia's efforts to use security and economic agreements toward these ends.

In sum, Putin does not see this negotiation as a means to bringing about an end to the conflict in Ukraine; he sees it as a key piece to a larger war against the West. In essence, this negotiation is much bigger than Russia and Ukraine. We need to listen to what Putin says but also watch what he does as he attempts to stall peace negotiations while attempting to achieve his larger aims.

Putin's invasion of Ukraine just over 3 years ago is an obvious violation of another international agreement that Russia was a party to—the 1994 Budapest Memorandum. Under this agreement, Ukraine willingly gave up its arsenal of nuclear weapons—the third largest in the world—in exchange for security assurances by Russia and other signatories. Russia went on then to violate the Budapest Memorandum in 2014 when it invaded Crimea and annexed the Crimea Peninsula. Then, as

we all know, Russia violated the Memorandum for a second time in February 2022 with its invasion of Ukraine proper.

If Russia were unwilling to honor the commitments enshrined in the Budapest Memorandum in 2014 and 2022, how, then, can Ukraine or the rest of the world, for that matter, be assured that they will honor a peace agreement brokered in 2025?

And, once again, Putin is threatening nuclear war if he does not receive the guarantees of a further demilitarized Ukraine.

But if he thinks these threats are an effective method of intimidating the United States and President Trump, he is mistaken. President Trump has made very clear that he will not allow Russia to continue doing what he calls "tapping us along."

Putin may well have been able to dupe Obama. He may have been able to intimidate Biden. But any attempt to fool or strong-arm President Trump will not succeed. If Putin thinks he is going to pull the wool over his eyes or box him into a corner, Putin is in for a very rude shock.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### TRIBUTE TO EDAN ALEXANDER

Mr. SCHUMER. First, Madam President, today, we have heard some very good news: Edan Alexander, an American Israeli and New Jersey native, has finally been freed from Hamas's brutal captivity and reunited with his family.

I first met Edan's parents, Adi and Yael, right after October 7—a few days after—when Edan was taken hostage by Hamas. For the last 583 days, Adi and Yael have fought tirelessly for Edan's release. Today, that work pays off as they finally get to hug their son again.

Edan's release gives me more hope and motivation to keep pushing for the release of all 58 hostages in Hamas's captivity, including the remains of four New Yorkers brutally murdered by Hamas: Omer Neutra, Itay Chen, Gad Haggai, and Judi Weinstein. They were brutally killed, but their remains should be sent back. But, of course, Hamas, as brutal as they are, doesn't do that yet.

As the President departs to the Middle East, I call on him and his administration to use the full weight of U.S. diplomatic power to get a deal to bring all of the hostages home.

I will continue working as long as it takes to finally bring every last hostage—including the remains of hostages no longer with us—home at last.

#### QATAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now on Qatar, yesterday, reports came