

to so many of them—are dedicated to helping our veterans, and when they see the administration just slashing and burning the VA without any concern for the consequences or why people were fired—the bottom line is still this: Thanks to Donald Trump and Secretary Collins, tens of thousands of highly skilled workers are exiting the VA, and our veterans are the ones that suffer.

I have heard this from veterans over and over again. One story sticks out in my mind. A woman who served in Afghanistan got PTSD and was treated at the VA hospital near Buffalo, and then, because she saw the dedication of those VA workers, she became an employee. She worked really hard. She was dedicated to the veterans. She knew she could probably make more money in another job. But she got home one Friday night and saw on her computer “You are RIF’d”—which means you are fired—with no reason why and not even a chance to come back into the office to pick up her mementos she had there—pictures of her loved ones.

Donald Trump likes to pretend that he cares about our armed services members and veterans, but actions speak louder than words, and Donald Trump’s actions when it comes to sabotaging the VA are disgusting. And the worst part about what is happening at the VA is the timing. While Donald Trump creates a staffing crisis at the VA, his big, ugly bill will jeopardize Medicaid coverage for veterans as well as shut down hospitals that serve veterans and thereby put even more strain on the VA. It is a vicious cycle, a cynical double whammy where veterans pay the ultimate price for Donald Trump’s cruelty.

The administration should immediately reverse course and refill these positions and make sure the VA operates at full capacity.

NOMINATION OF BRYAN BEDFORD

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, on the nomination of Bedford to the FAA, later this evening, Senate Republicans will vote to advance Donald Trump’s nominee to lead the FAA, Bryan Bedford.

To say that Mr. Bedford is a deeply flawed nominee would be putting it mildly. Throughout his career as an airline executive and during his hearing, Mr. Bedford has shown a callous disregard for the 1,500-hour rule and even refused to commit to protecting the rule if confirmed.

I worked long and hard with the families of Flight 3407, years ago, to establish the 1,500-hour rule after they lost all their loved ones on a tragic plane crash that occurred on a winter’s night in Western New York. They have worked so hard, and they are so proud of their accomplishments. In the face of unspeakable loss, they worked relentlessly to change America’s aviation laws to prevent a tragedy like that that happened to their families.

Today, the 1,500-hour rule is the gold standard for pilot training. So affirming the 1,500-hour rule should be the easiest thing in the world for someone nominated to oversee the FAA, but Mr. Bedford failed again and again to do so.

Weakening the 1,500-hour rule is dangerous and could cost lives. With aviation safety top of mind, Americans don’t want pilots with less training, which would happen if the 1,500-hour rule were not extended, were repealed or not enforced.

Americans don’t want the FAA weakening safety standards, but I fear that is precisely what Mr. Bedford will do: weaken the 1,500-hour rule, weaken safety standards, and prioritize profits over passenger safety.

The American people deserve far better than an FAA Administrator who isn’t fully committed to their safety. The Senate should reject Mr. Bedford’s nomination.

I yield the floor.

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

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

The Democratic whip.

CENTRAL TEXAS FLOODS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, summer camp is a great memory for so many of us. You think about the good times we had, at the right moment in life, with a lot of friends, learning the basics of swimming, archery, target shooting, and other things, like camping out—memories you carry for a lifetime, wonderful memories, a rite of passage for many individuals and families, a family tradition passed on to younger siblings and, ultimately, to our own children and grandchildren.

There are so many images in our minds, over the last several days, as to the tragedy that occurred in Central Texas. I know I speak for millions of Americans when I say we are heartbroken over the flash floods that devastated Central Texas this past weekend.

Early Friday morning, while most were fast asleep, a foot of rain fell onto Texas Hill Country. This deluge floated to the Guadalupe River, causing it to rise by 26 feet in 45 minutes—26 feet in 45 minutes.

Near the Guadalupe, a girls sleep away camp, Camp Mystic, which had been there for 99 years, was all but destroyed by the floods. Already, that camp has confirmed that 27 of their campers and counselors died in that flood—27.

I send my deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those campers and counselors.

Tragically, the flooding in Texas continues to take lives. More than 100 peo-

ple have perished. That number is expected to grow, sadly, in the coming days.

In the midst of this disaster, I am heartened by the kindness and courage shown by the first responders and volunteers. Twenty separate agencies, at every level of government, have come together to help save lives. At Camp Mystic, the counselors, many of whom had just graduated from high school, risked their own lives to save younger campers. We will never forget that bravery.

This disaster has impacted people of both political faiths—Republicans and Democrats—and Independents as well.

I want to say this, and I say this on reflection of my career in the House and the Senate: I have never, to my knowledge—never—voted against disaster assistance for people in other States than my home State of Illinois. There, but for the grace of God, go my people that I represent. And I would hope that the Senate and the House would stand together, Democrats and Republicans, and say we are going to be there for the victims of this disaster.

I pray that we find the missing loved ones and that we take the necessary steps to stop another tragedy like this from occurring.

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this weekend, across the country, we observed our Nation’s 249th Independence Day, a day intended to celebrate a government of, by, and for the people, in Lincoln’s words. But this Independence Day was anything but a celebration in one respect, and that is because, this Fourth of July, the President and congressional Republicans decided to sign their so-called Big Beautiful Bill, and in so doing, they retreated from the values that our Founders etched in the Declaration, “that all Men are created equal,” not just the wealthy and well-connected.

Americans across this Nation overwhelmingly oppose this bill—and for good reason. You see, this bill signed by the President on the Fourth of July is the largest cut in healthcare and the largest cut in nutrition assistance in history, slashing more than \$1 trillion from healthcare programs like Medicaid and \$200 billion from the SNAP program.

Seventeen million Americans will lose their health insurance. Health insurance premiums will rise for another 20 million Americans. Three million people will have food taken off the table, including kids, seniors, and veterans.

I can’t understand the celebration of the facts that I have just read.

I have heard misstatements. One misstatement was: Don’t worry. The people we take off Medicaid will be the illegal immigrants.

They are not eligible for Medicaid, and they are certainly not in that calculation of 17 million Americans.

Why do we do these things? Why would any government do these things to so many innocent people?

In this case, very simply, it is to give tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans and the biggest corporations. The richest Americans will be seeing \$400,000 more in tax cuts in their pockets every year because of this legislation. I don't know how their lifestyle—if you are a millionaire or something like that and you get a tax break of \$400,000, what does that money do to change your life?

Well, I can tell you this: One thing that will change your life forever is to face a dramatic medical challenge in your family and not have health insurance to cover you. I have been there, and I have lived through that. It is something you never wish on anyone. And yet 17 million Americans, unfortunately, will lose their health insurance under this bill, the Big Beautiful Bill, signed by President Trump.

Despite a last-ditch effort—there was a failing attempt at buying votes and pretending to care about rural areas, like my area of Downstate Illinois—more than 300 rural hospitals and 500 nursing homes may be forced to close because of these cutbacks in Medicaid. That is because this Big Beautiful Bill cripples the Medicaid Program that keeps our rural hospitals and communities afloat. That includes HSHS St. Francis Hospital in Litchfield, IL, where Medicaid pays for 53 percent of the hospitalization; St. Mary's Hospital in Centralia, IL, where Medicaid pays for 42 percent of hospitalizations; and OSF St. Clare Hospital in Princeton, IL, where Medicaid covers 45 percent of the hospitalizations.

The administrators in these hospitals have warned us that this could be the breaking point. Many of these hospitals barely survive, barely keep their doors open. Now, all of these hospitals—already operating on the margins—may face impossible decisions to scale back services. For what? To pay for tax breaks for the wealthiest people in this country.

Aside from hospitals, there is also going to be a major consequence on American energy. I commend to my colleagues and those who are following this debate, in today's New York Times, an article by Thomas Friedman. He talks about the impact on energy from the decisions made by the signing of this bill.

This bill kills solar, wind, and EV tax credits enjoyed by companies and consumers alike, all but ceding the future of electricity to China and risking billions of dollars of investments in renewable energy—ironically, mostly in Republican States.

While working families grapple with the consequences of these cuts, they are going to see the family home expenses increase by \$1,000 a year. Utility bills are going up because of this bill—this bill signed by the President, the Big Beautiful Bill.

The Chicago Tribune recently shared a story of Isaiah Rogers, a 61-year-old

man who lives in the West Pullman neighborhood in Chicago. Several years ago, Isaiah was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. As a result of this diagnosis, he has not been able to return to his job, trimming trees, and has been working small side jobs. Medicaid pays for Isaiah's doctor visits and his insulin.

A single father without a high school degree, Isaiah is concerned that the bill's cuts and changes to Medicaid will result in his losing his health coverage. And if Isaiah loses Medicaid, he will no longer be able to afford his insulin and other medications. He may face a diabetic complication or coma or even suffer a stroke. What will that mean to his 12-year-old son?

It is unconscionable to think that the other party would pull the plug on lifesaving health coverage and deny food to our most needy children, but that is exactly what they voted for and celebrated on July 4.

As Republicans moved this megabill through Congress, Democrats did our best, in the minority, to push back. Over the course of 27 hours, Senate Democrats forced votes on many amendments to put Republicans on notice and show their constituents what their real positions are on issues. It was the longest vote-arama in the history of the Senate. It included putting Republicans on the record, voting against nursing home care, home healthcare, food assistance for children of veterans, protections for Medicaid, clean energy jobs—and the list goes on. And an expansion of the child tax credit, an idea that has proven successful—all that was sacrificed to give billionaires tax cuts instead.

In the end, three sensible Senate Republicans looked at this ugly betrayal of a bill and agreed they couldn't be part of the process. I commend them. But, sadly, three votes on the other side of the aisle wasn't enough. We needed one more.

And who swooped in to cast his vote—the decisive vote? Vice President VANCE. He showed up at the last minute and cast a tie-breaking vote in the Senate to push the bill across the finish line.

A few short years ago, then-Vice President Harris broke a tie in this very Chamber to pass the largest climate investment bill in history and to lower prescription drug prices for millions of Americans—what a sharp contrast. This Vice President cast a deciding vote that will be painful for so many families across America, and he could have done so much more and so much better for the people of this Nation. That is the difference in priorities. In politics, it basically boils down to: Whose side are you on?

As the effects of this bill take shape and slither their way through our communities, our Republican colleagues will have to look their constituents in the eyes and explain their votes. They will have to explain to a farmer who now must drive an additional 50 miles

to the nearest hospital why they had to shut the community hospital doors. They will have to explain to the grandmother at a nursing home why her care is being slimmed down or eliminated because of cutbacks to Medicaid. They will have to explain to the young mother preparing to have a baby why there is no longer a maternity ward in her county.

This bill flies in the face of American values that we celebrate on the Fourth of July and everything we stand for. The other party has a lot of explaining to do, and the American people are going to face the consequences.

I yield the floor.

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

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

WHISTLEBLOWERS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today I would like to address a whistleblower complaint that I received the morning before Emil Bove's nomination hearing. That is the complaint that was given to the New York Times for them to report on it the very same morning.

One group has publicly accused this chairman of the Judiciary Committee of undermining that whistleblower. That group also said:

I used to be a champion of whistleblowers.

Then the whistleblower and his lawyers took part in a political hit piece on my handling of this situation, and so now my Democratic colleagues have all of a sudden found whistleblowers to be of benefit to them.

Let me be absolutely clear. I appreciate the whistleblower's disclosure being sent to my office. My door is open to anyone, but that doesn't mean that I am going to jump at every allegation in a way that some may want this Senator to do. So let me respond with a very short history lesson.

Last Congress, during the Biden administration, I worked to protect many whistleblowers, as I have throughout my Senate career. I recall with pride the work that I did during the Reagan administration with Department of Defense whistleblowers.

In some cases, my whistleblower work never sees the light of day because the situation demands nonpublic attention. In other cases, publicity is required.

In my efforts to protect the IRS whistleblowers who came forward during the previous administration, my Democratic colleagues didn't join me. In my efforts to protect the Department of Homeland Security whistleblowers, my Democratic colleagues refused to join me.