

serious concerns. I think my colleagues, if they look at her honestly, will as well. I urge them to join me in opposing her nomination.

(Mrs. BRITT assumed the Chair.)

TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I remember 9/11 very well. I was in this building meeting with Senator DASCHLE just down the hall, and we heard news that a plane had struck a building in New York. By the time I made it to the meeting, it turned out there was a second plane that had done the same.

Madam President, 9/11 was clearly no accident. It was a terrorist act. As a result of that terrorist act, we made decisions as a nation on a bipartisan basis. One of the most bipartisan decisions we made was what to do with those who were responsible—Osama bin Laden and others. There was no doubt in my mind that we had to answer what they did with force—no doubt whatsoever. I am not inclined to that conclusion on an ordinary basis, but I saw no other alternative but to send the world a message that no one could kill so many innocent Americans and not be held personally responsible.

So there was a vote on the floor—not for the invasion of Iraq but for the invasion of Afghanistan to go after the terrorists, Osama bin Laden and his terrorist group. I voted for it. Every Senator of both political parties voted for it. The same thing was true in the House with only one exception. It was a decision we made to get involved in Afghanistan. As reluctant as I was to see us get into war, I felt we had no choice—no choice whatsoever than to make that clear. So we went in and engaged in that battle for one of the longest wars in our history.

Eventually, under President Obama, we found Osama bin Laden and removed him from this Earth and many of his followers as well. But we paid a price as well.

The men and women of the United States stood behind Congress's decision and enlisted in our services and risked their lives in combat in Afghanistan. It was a terrible assignment. They did it honorably. They did it effectively.

One of the keys to their success in eliminating Osama bin Laden and many of his followers was the support of some Afghan people who risked their own lives to step up and help American soldiers. Day in and day out, these men and women joined our forces, trying to put an end to the terrorism we knew on 9/11.

At the end of the conflict, some of those Afghans who risked their lives to help American soldiers came to the United States, and they were given what is known as temporary protected status, meaning they could stay in this country until the dangers in their home country had abated.

TPS is a temporary designation allowing certain foreign nationals from

countries experiencing turmoil to remain here without fear of being deported—back to Afghanistan in this case.

TPS was first designated for Afghans under the Biden administration in 2022 after we withdrew from Afghanistan, marking the end of America's longest war.

For over two decades, tens of thousands of Afghan civilians worked alongside our military and diplomats. Make no mistake, they were risking their lives to help us and faced the possibility of retribution in their own country. I saw firsthand during a visit to Afghanistan some years ago just how these Afghans were making that courageous sacrifice. And the lives of their families, of course, were also in danger because of it.

In return, we promised to the Afghans who risked their lives to help our troops that we would keep them safe from retaliation, and we opened our arms to welcome others, some of them fleeing brutal conditions under the Taliban.

In fact, Afghanistan today also faces the horrors of an administration that has not delivered for their people: record malnutrition, shortages of basic medicine, horrible repression of women and girls, and instability that threatens the entire region.

Listen to this carefully. The State Department—our State Department—has put out a notice that Americans should not travel to Afghanistan because it is too dangerous. So why, why are we facing the situation where this Trump administration is going to eliminate temporary protected status for the Afghans in the United States, including those who risked their lives to help our troops? Why would we send them back to a country so dangerous we warn Americans not to visit? We are also planning on closing, according to President Trump, the very office at the Department of State that protects these vulnerable Afghans here in the United States.

Now, with the lifting of this TPS designation, these Afghans already legally in the United States—including some who risked their lives to help us—may face detention and deportation, returning to horrific conditions in their homeland.

I urge the President in the strongest terms to reconsider this. It is not just the fate of these Afghans, but it is the reputation of the United States. God forbid we are ever in another conflict in some country and turn to the local population to stand by us and risk their lives to help us and when they agree, turn our backs on them again. That is not what a great nation does.

I think most Americans feel particularly that Afghans who risked their lives to help our troops deserve better than to be forced to return to the danger of Afghanistan.

This decision is a sad one for America. I think we are better than this. I am sorry the Afghans who risked their

lives to help our troops are now being abandoned by the Trump administration.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, 2 weeks ago, Republicans passed one of the most unpopular bills in the history of the country—one of the most unpopular bills in the history of the country. Now that it is law, we don't have to imagine anymore what might happen; we know for sure what is going to happen to tens of millions of people all across the country.

I want to focus on five things that are going to happen—five things that are going to happen because we no longer have to talk about a House version or a Senate version or what the President says he wants or if someone says "If I don't get this, I am going to vote no"; now we have a law. We have public law, Federal law.

The first thing that is going to happen is 17 million Americans, including 9 million people on Medicaid, will lose healthcare coverage in about 18 months' time. To keep their coverage, people will have to complete hours and hours of paperwork just to prove they are working. That is in spite of the fact that the number of nondisabled adults on Medicaid who don't work is very low—about 8 percent.

How do these work requirements actually function? Well, in Arkansas, which is one of the two States that tried this and then pulled it back because it was a failure, the reporting portal was only open during the day and closed between the hours of 9 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Let's say you work long hours as a truckdriver. If you are trying to log on at night to fill out your forms, you are out of luck. Let's say something unfortunate happens to you. Let's say you get in a car accident or have a bad case of the flu. Maybe you are not hospitalized, but you are incapacitated, at least temporarily. If you missed the reporting window, you might lose the coverage.

What is preposterous about these Medicaid work requirements is that in order to establish that you are either working or seeking work, you have to fill out a form. If you get sick and are bedridden and can't fill out the form, they say: Don't worry, there is an exception for a situation like that.

Guess how you apply for the exception. By filling out another form.

There are only a couple million people on Medicaid who even fit the description of someone who is nondisabled and on Medicaid. Yet the actual official projections, which is to say the way they save the money, is they are projecting that many, many millions of people are going to get kicked off of Medicaid even though they are eligible.

I know I am a Democrat, and I wanted this bill to fail, and I want to tell you why this is a failure of a bill, but that is literally in their projections. Without those projections, they don't have enough revenue for the biggest tax cuts for the wealthiest people in the history of the planet.

No. 2, hundreds of rural hospitals and nursing homes will close without enough funding to continue operating. More people are going to get sick because of this law, but we are going to have fewer hospitals and doctors to take care of them. Why? Because Medicaid is a big revenue stream for really all hospitals but especially rural hospitals. It can be up to about half of the payer mix.

What is a payer mix? It just means you might get paid by private insurance 30 percent, you might get paid by Medicaid 45 percent, you might have a little VA, and you might have a little private pay; it adds up to 100 percent. As you look at your revenue picture, 40, 50—sometimes even more—percent of that money comes from Medicaid. If there is a huge \$1 trillion nationwide reduction in Medicaid money, that money is reduced money for rural hospitals, and rural hospitals will definitely close—not all of them but many of them.

So even if you are not on Medicaid, if you live in a place where there is a rural hospital and that is the flagship hospital for a small town, that might not be available to you. You might have to drive 2 or 3 hours for care, even emergency care.

No. 3, starting next year, tens of millions of people are going to pay hundreds of dollars a month more for health insurance.

This is what, I think, we should linger on because now that the fight over ObamaCare is sort of in the rearview mirror, people just think they get onto the ACA portal; they sign up for their healthcare; and they pay what they pay, right? Like, Oh, I am on a family plan. I want "this" level of deductible. Then it spits out how much you are going to pay every month. What tens of millions of people don't actually know is that those rates on the exchange are subsidized, and without those subsidies, we are going to go back to the bad old days of pre-ObamaCare, when people would pay absurd amounts of money for their healthcare insurance even if they are employed, even if they do have insurance.

What is, I think, underrated, both politically and on policy, is all of those rates get set in the next couple of months because, in order to start paying and in order to start enrolling, you have got to notify people: Hey, your thing that was \$289 a month now is \$789 a month. So sometime in the fall—it depends on the State, in October, November, and some people in December—people are going to get a letter, saying: If you want to stay on the same healthcare plan, here is your new price. And those new prices are going to be astronomical.

Now, we do have a disagreement between the parties. I think there are a lot of people who just don't like the public subsidy of healthcare insurance premiums. I am sure the Presiding Officer has her reservations about that kind of thing. It is about the size and the scope of government, but there is a factual aspect to this which is, whatever one's governing philosophy is and whatever one thought about the Affordable Care Act, the plain fact of the matter is, people are going to get letters from their insurance carriers with astronomical increases that they will not be able to pay.

No. 4, 5 million people are either going to lose some or all of their nutritional assistance starting next year.

You know, this trope is almost as old as I am—like some lazy person on food stamps just collecting food stamps, loving that life, going to the store, buying fancy stuff. It is \$6 a day. The average nutritional assistance amount per person per day is 6 bucks. I don't know if you know this, but we have subsidized food in the U.S. Senate, not because the government is paying for it but because all of the restaurants that operate here don't have to pay lease rent so it is a little bit cheaper than you would normally get. I can't get anything for 6 bucks downstairs in the Dirksen cafeteria, not that would feed me.

Six dollars a day is the average amount, and what the Republicans decided to do to generate savings, to find savings, is to cut nutritional assistance. Why? Because they needed to pay for the biggest tax cut in American history for the wealthiest people and corporations that has ever existed. It would be one thing if people were getting 75 bucks a day for food. It would be one thing if they were getting 25 bucks a day for food, but they are getting 6 bucks, and 5 million people will now have an enormously difficult time trying to figure out just how to survive the day—and I mean that quite literally, survive the day—to find the calories within their \$6 or \$8 or \$12 budget.

Finally, people are going to pay hundreds of dollars more per year in electricity because this bill throttles the cheapest and most abundant form of energy in wind and solar. And this is where you have got to stay with me for a moment.

I am very passionate about climate action. I think it is a planetary emergency. I think it is a moral obligation that we take care of our planet so it can sustain us for generations to come. But even if you don't care about that, the only energy that is ready to come online right now is solar energy—some wind energy but mostly solar energy. Why? Because nuclear, frankly, takes at least 10 years to permit and site, and, of course, anytime anyone wants to do any nuclear power generation, everybody in whatever neighborhood or State or county that is in tries to stop it. You don't just have regulatory risk; you have project risk, so 10 years is an

optimistic scenario. I am a big believer in nuclear energy, but 10 years is the most realistic scenario to get a bunch of nuclear energy online. Likewise, geothermal is, maybe, 5 to 8 years in the most optimistic scenario. Again, I love geothermal energy. I think it is an untapped resource across the United States of America.

We have about a 6-year gap before any of those other technologies are ready. So a lot of fossil advocates go: Well, why don't we do more gas? There is a backlog of combined-cycle gas turbines, and that can't just be fixed by saying: "I will take more." Everybody wants more. There is a backlog. You cannot get gas generation online in the next 5 years. So what does that mean? It means, over the next 5 years, solar is the stuff that is instantly pluggable into the grid, supercheap, not terribly controversial except for in this Chamber, and ready to power the AI revolution and whatever other load needs we have.

But this bill kind of punitively, kind of ideologically decides: No, we are not for "all of the above"; you know that thing we said about whatever is cheap and plentiful and available every time we were trying to prevent clean energy from coming on the grid? Do you remember that thing we used to say? Now, really, what we meant is, we quite hate solar energy, particularly. We hate solar energy. Again, I think that is preposterous from a planetary standpoint, but even if there were no planetary crisis, this is the energy that is available to us, and we are about to face energy shortages.

The reason, for instance, Texas, of all places, has not had blackouts and brownouts is because solar can absorb wind; the Sun is high. It is 108 degrees, and everybody is pumping their air-conditioners. That also happens to be the point in time and the point of the day when all of the solar farms are running at full capacity, and they can power the grid.

So solar energy isn't something from 17 years ago when you said, you know, sometimes the Sun is shining and sometimes it is not and it is intermittent and the batteries aren't there. All of that is in the rearview mirror. All of the technical issues—not all of them. Ninety percent of the technical issues related to solar energy have been resolved.

That is the scariest thing for the fossil energy people. Do you know why? Because they can't argue that this isn't economically smarter; they just have to argue that it is woke or something, like woke electrons. Who cares where the electrons come from? If they are cheap and plentiful, we should all be for them.

So this bill is going to create shortages which will drive up the prices and, in some places, reduce power quality. What does "power quality" mean? It means we are going to have blackouts and brownouts across the country.

To do any of these things in the bill would be bad, but to do all of it—all of

it—in order to pay for the biggest wealth transfer from the poor to the rich in history is morally and economically bankrupt. Nobody asked for any of this. Trump voters were not demanding any of this. Nobody was asking to lose their healthcare or not be able to feed their kids or to pay more to keep the lights on at home, but they raced to do it anyway, knowing full well how devastating it would be for the country and for their own home States.

One final point: We are not going to stop talking about this. We are going to talk about this until it is repealed. We are going to talk about this when the rates go up for your electricity. We are going to talk about this when kids are thrown off their nutritional assistance. We are going to talk about this when rural hospitals close. We are going to talk about this when your insurance coverage rates go up.

We are not going to stop talking about this because this document which was enacted into law is a perfect encapsulation of the difference between the political parties. My party is flawed—obviously, my party is flawed—but I have never seen my party propose a bill that transferred so much money from the poor to the rich, and I have never seen my party propose a bill that raises the price of electricity, that raises the price of food, and that raises the price of healthcare. So we are going to talk about this today, tomorrow, and for the next 18 months until this thing is repealed from the Federal lawbooks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, time flies these days, but it was just over a week ago when the House and the Senate passed what President Trump called the One Big Beautiful Bill, just in time for him to sign it before the deadline that he himself requested of July 4th.

This comes after naysayers and the media said it couldn't be done—simply, that the Speaker didn't have the votes with the razor-thin margins, and that, here in the Senate, we would not be able to get the majority vote we needed to pass this bill into law. But we did. To all those detractors and Debbie Downers, it looked like this pessimism was completely unwarranted.

Now that the Republicans have proven their critics wrong by accomplishing what they insisted had to be done in order to avoid a tax increase on millions of Americans, our colleagues across the aisle do what they do best, and that is criticize what we have done, which they themselves were unwilling to do. But having offered no positive alternative, all they can do is what they have learned to do, which is to oppose each and every thing that President Trump and Republicans propose.

Ever since the Big Beautiful Bill was signed into law, and even when lawmakers were working hard to make it over the finish line, our Democratic colleagues said that they found political gold in this bill and that this would be the pathway for them to win back the majority in the House of Representatives in 2026. And, of course, the mainstream media have parroted their party line, claiming that this bill will end up being unpopular.

They have done everything from describing this as not the Big Beautiful Bill but as the “Big Ugly Bill” and claiming that somehow it benefits only a fraction of the American people at the top 1 percent and accusing us of fiscal irresponsibility, while they claim that somehow the most vulnerable among us have become even more vulnerable. None of these accusations are true.

Of course, again, our Democratic colleagues could have worked with us to pass a bipartisan piece of legislation but chose not to do so. They have no positive policy proposals or vision for what America should be doing. At a time when we are confronting a multi-trillion-dollar tax increase, all they can do is criticize and, of course, reflexively oppose each and every thing that President Trump is for.

But I think it is important to point out what we were able to accomplish in this bill and why it was so important that we were successful. This legislation prevents hard-working taxpayers from facing the largest tax hike in American history.

After 4 years of the Biden administration, we saw 40-year-high inflation. The cost of everything has gone up because of massive overspending during the 4 years of the Biden-Harris administration. Taxpayers have already sustained a cut in their standard of living through this hidden tax called inflation. So the last thing they needed or they deserved was a massive tax increase on top of this 40-year-high inflation, where everything, on average, is, let's say, an estimate of 20 percent more expensive than it was before the Biden administration.

In addition to preventing that multi-trillion-dollar tax increase, we made these tax provisions permanent, preventing future Congresses from allowing that tax increase to take effect. We also provided additional benefits to working parents by making sure that their child tax credit wasn't cut in half.

And, of course, the President promised no tax on tips and no tax on overtime for millions of middle-class families. We felt it was important—and I know the President did—to keep his promise.

In Texas, the Big Beautiful Bill will save my constituents an average of \$3,000 next year. That is real money to most Texas families.

The other allegation by Democrats is that somehow this bill was not fiscally responsible. Well, we are \$36 trillion-

plus in debt. But, again, here is another example of where our Democratic colleagues have nothing to say about how we address these problems, other than: Let's raise taxes on the American people.

According to the Wall Street Journal, about 62 percent of taxpayers would see their taxes go up if Democrats had their way and the temporary tax provisions in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act had expired.

But it is important for us to begin to chip away at that national debt. I have said, time and time again, that we are spending more money on interest on the national debt than we are on defense, which is an unsustainable trajectory in a very dangerous world. I have been an advocate of looking at ways to trim mandatory spending programs, and the Big Beautiful Bill does just that.

I think what most people don't fully understand, including Members of Congress, is that the Federal Government spends roughly \$6.5 trillion a year. We appropriate about a third of that during the appropriations process, but the rest of it is on autopilot. It is mandatory spending programs that Congress does not appropriate on an annual basis. But once we turn it on, it continues until it is changed—usually never—and it goes up more and more each year with cost-of-living provisions.

Then there is the Tax Code itself, which is used sometimes for what is called tax expenditures. So we needed to look at ways to begin to reform some of the mandatory spending programs, if we were going to have a prayer at reducing the national debt, even by a little, as a first step.

While this bill was not perfect—and, certainly, no piece of legislation ever is—it did make important reforms that will help us bend the curve of our debt trajectory.

For example—and Democrats opposed this—we implemented work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents to receive means-tested programs like Medicaid.

So let's back up a little bit.

Means-tested programs have income requirements. If you go above that threshold, you don't qualify. If you fall below it, you do. But Democrats have succeeded in making sure that able-bodied adults were receiving massive benefits under safety net programs, even though they were able to work and provide for their families and should have been working.

In fact, our healthcare system had gotten so out of whack that more money was going to able-bodied adults than to the disabled, to pregnant women, and to children under the Medicaid Program. Our bill fixed that.

Are work requirements for able-bodied adults some sort of radical conservative or Republican idea? Not if you look at the polling, which says that 62