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Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TIM SHEEHY, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Our Father God, author of liberty who has made and preserved us as a nation, bless today our lawmakers who are called to serve the Republic by bringing order out of chaos, hope out of despair, and peace out of strife. May they lift the shield of their integrity against the enemies of justice and truth at this time when the world's hopes depend on character.

Guide our legislators so that Your providence will prevail in these challenging times. Make them worthy of the sacrifices of those who day by day give their all to keep us free.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant executive clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 17, 2025.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TIM SHEEHY, a Sen-

ator from the State of Montana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SHEEHY thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of Joshua M. Divine, of Missouri, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern and Western Districts of Missouri.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

MEDICAID

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the Democrat hysteria over Republicans' One Big Beautiful Bill is in full swing, and Democrats seem to have fixated on the bill's Medicaid provisions as a useful tool, they hope, to attack Republicans. And they decided that a good talking point is to blame rural hospital closures, including current rural hospital closures, on our bill's Medicaid provisions.

Well, there is only one little problem. The provisions of our bill the Demo-

crats would like you to believe threaten rural hospitals, those provisions don't even go into effect until 2028, 2½ years from now. Suggesting that those provisions are responsible for rural hospitals closing this month is the height of absurdity.

I said there was one little problem with Democrats' argument, but, in fact, there are a whole lot of problems with Democrats' arguments, starting with the fact that rural hospital closures are a longstanding problem, not something that is suddenly being triggered by our bill.

Under President Biden, Medicaid spending soared, and yet rural hospitals still closed. Why? Because rural hospitals have to deal with a lot of challenges that hospitals in major metropolitan areas don't have to deal with. Despite those challenges, many rural hospitals are finding ways to adjust to keep their doors open and to serve their communities, and we have taken steps with our bill to ensure that they can continue to do so with a \$50 billion fund for vulnerable providers like rural hospitals—a fund that goes into effect this year.

Our goal with this fund is to give rural hospitals and other vulnerable providers the time and resources to find solutions to some of the challenges they are facing and to give State governments the time to look at their budgets and develop ways of assisting rural hospitals that don't involve pushing State responsibilities onto Federal taxpayers.

Now, hopefully, what I have said so far brings some much needed clarity and accuracy to this discussion. But I want to step back for a minute and discuss the overall scope of what we are doing with the Medicaid provisions in our bill.

We are restoring Medicaid to what it was originally intended to be—a Federal-State partnership to support the most vulnerable Americans. Let me just repeat that. We are restoring Medicaid to what it was originally intended

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



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to be—a Federal-State partnership to support the most vulnerable Americans.

There has been drift on both of those in the past few years. We have drifted from a Federal-State partnership to a situation where the Federal Government picks up more and more—sometimes close to all—of the tab. And we have drifted from a focus on the most vulnerable Americans.

Medicaid was created to serve the most vulnerable populations: the elderly poor, the disabled, pregnant women, and children in need. But in 2010, President Obama and Democrats allowed States to expand Medicaid to include able-bodied adults earning up to 138 percent of the Federal poverty level. They gave States an incentive to do so by promising that the Federal Government would pick up almost all of the tab.

Now combine that with the Biden administration's Medicaid rules and waivers, and both the Medicaid population and Federal spending on Medicaid have exploded.

Medicaid spending has grown by more than 50 percent since 2019—50 percent since 2019. That is utterly unsustainable, and it threatens the stability of the program for the most vulnerable populations.

So Republicans implemented several commonsense measures to slow the rate of Medicaid growth and refocus the program on Americans most in need. Know what I said—slow the rate of Medicaid growth.

We are not cutting Medicaid. We are simply slowing the rate of growth.

As Senate Finance Committee Chairman CRAPO noted, only in Washington—only in Washington—is a smaller increase in spending considered a cut.

So what did we do in our bill? We implemented measures to remove noncitizens from the Medicaid rolls. We implemented an extremely mild work requirement, just 20 hours per week for able-bodied, working-age adults without young children. We overturned Biden-era regulations that made it difficult to remove individuals who don't qualify for Medicaid, and we took aim at rampant abuse of the provider tax loophole.

Now, use of this loophole, which sees States inflate Medicaid service prices in order to garner a larger reimbursement from the Federal Government, has been a problem for quite a while now.

In fact, President Obama proposed multiple budgets featuring measures to rein in abuse of the provider tax. But States continued to take advantage of the gimmick; and thanks to waivers that the Biden administration issued to California and other blue States last year allowing them to further exploit a similar loophole, taxpayers were on the hook for tens of billions of dollars in new spending.

So we took action to rein things in. We are not eliminating States' ability

to use the provider tax loophole, but we are instituting limits—the identical limits, in fact, that President Obama proposed imposing.

We are making States take responsibility for their Medicaid decisions—States like California, which chooses to spend State funds to have its Medicaid program cover illegal immigrants. They should not be able to, in effect, have the Federal Government bail them out for their reckless spending decisions.

Resources are not unlimited, and States need to shoulder their share of the Federal-State Medicaid partnership rather than pushing off their costs onto Federal taxpayers.

The net effect of all of these measures—like removing ineligible individuals and individuals who refuse to work from the Medicaid rolls and restraining State abuse of the provider tax loophole—will be able to put Medicaid on a more sustainable fiscal footing going forward and put a renewed emphasis on the vulnerable individuals this program was actually created to serve.

Vulnerable individuals will also be helped by the major investment our bill makes in expanding home and community-based services for individuals with developmental disabilities. This will reduce multiyear waiting lists for services and allow individuals with disabilities to access the care that they need at home or in their communities.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act was developed to make hard-working Americans safer, stronger, and more secure. And the Medicaid provisions of the bill fit right in with that mandate. By refocusing available Medicaid dollars on those this program was originally intended to serve, we will make vulnerable Americans more secure and ensure that this program will continue to be available to Americans in need long into the future.

Mr. President, that sounds like a good day's work.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

RESCISSIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night, while Americans were asleep, Senate Republicans gutted critical funding for local TV and radio, for foreign aid that keeps America safe, all to keep paying for their billionaire tax cuts.

On the very same day that communities in Alaska turned to public radio and TV for tsunami warning updates, Republicans in Washington voted to

take that funding away. It is senseless, it is cruel, and just defies common sense. Republicans have become the party of "cut, cut, cut now, ask questions later; cut healthcare for 17 million Americans; cut food assistance for hungry kids; cut good-paying energy jobs, let Beijing get ahead of us." Never mind that kids will go hungry or that families will lose insurance or that people get sick and die.

Make no mistake—make no mistake—just like with the "Big Ugly Bill" the more Americans learn about what Republicans just did in this rescission package, the more they won't like it and the more Republicans will squirm. We saw a lot of squirming last night.

When parents see Republicans just axed educational programming, when people see Republicans just axed "Sesame Street" to pay for tax cuts for billionaires, when rural Americans see Republicans not just betrayed them and defunded public radio—sometimes the only source in rural areas so vital to natural disasters, it is the only news source there—the consequences will be severe. Americans will remember. Democrats will ensure that they don't forget.

We will make sure Americans don't forget what Republicans are doing, just like we are doing with the "Big Ugly Bill," just like these taxes for billionaires, just like these massive Medicaid cuts.

Last night's vote axing PBS, axing local TV will haunt Republicans as the damage sets in. Today, tomorrow, next month, next year, Americans will be talking about these cuts at their diners, at the grocery store, at dinner, at the park, because the cuts will be felt everywhere.

Here is what Americans don't want: They don't want Republicans to rubberstamp DOGE's awful and damaging cuts, no questions asked. Republicans never seem to challenge Donald Trump or DOGE—or both.

When you cut investments that actually make people's lives better, when you cut those investments like healthcare, local TV, and education, people get angry. So make no mistake, when Donald Trump and Republicans rammed the "Big Ugly Bill" through, Americans quickly saw how Donald Trump and Republicans betrayed them, and their popularity is already declining.

When families saw the consequences, when Americans saw the Medicaid cuts, when kids are getting food ripped from their mouths so billionaires can pay less in taxes, it is disastrous for Donald Trump and many Republicans, and we saw that on many faces across the aisle last night who didn't want to do what Trump wanted them to do but were forced into it because of threats or frailty or fear.

Well, the same thing has happened, as I speak. As I speak, Democrats are fighting in the Appropriations Committee to unwind the awful DOGE cuts