

The senior assistant legislative 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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.

#### BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, people of good will can see things differently, and I certainly respect my colleague from Wyoming. He is a friend and has been for many years. But I certainly disagree with his analysis of the big beautiful Trump budget bill.

The day before yesterday, I had a visit in my office here in Washington from the head of the largest dental insurance company in the United States. Some of us are fortunate to have dental insurance. We know that it doesn't cover the complete cost of dental care, but it is helpful, and many of us feel fortunate to be in that position.

As a result of the big beautiful Trump budget bill, which was just described by the Senator from Wyoming, 4 million Americans are going to lose their dental insurance because of that bill. Why? Because that bill, unfortunately, cut \$900 billion—\$900 billion—from Medicaid. It means that premiums under dental insurance are likely to go up over 90 percent, and 4 million Americans will lose their dental insurance.

Is that something that we bargained for? Was that part of the deal that is being described as successful in helping American families?

Meanwhile, up to 17 million Americans are going to lose their health insurance. Has the Presiding Officer ever been in a position where you had no health insurance and a serious medical problem in your family? I have. I will never forget it as long as I live. It is a terrible feeling to feel that you just can't ask for the very best medical care because you don't have health insurance.

Up to 17 million Americans will lose their health insurance because of the big beautiful Trump budget bill, which was passed exclusively with Republican votes. And as far as local hospitals, I invite my colleague from Wyoming to come listen to the leaders and administrators of rural hospitals in Illinois. They do not sing the same song that he just did on the floor. They are worried that many of them cannot survive these cuts in Medicaid.

Medicaid is a critical program not only for hospitals and clinics but also for nursing homes. I have nursing home organizers and executives who have contacted me and have said they don't know if they can keep their doors open.

If you have found a good, safe, trusted place for your mother, grandmother, or someone in your family and now run the risk of a facility being closed or the help that is necessary to keep your loved one in a nursing home disappears, you wonder to yourselves: What is next? Where are we going to send Mother or our grandmother or

someone in our family? That is the reality of what we are facing with the cuts in the Big Beautiful Bill.

So why—why—would the Republicans, going into an election cycle, want to have 17 million Americans lose their health insurance; 4 million lose their dental insurance; rural hospitals, many of them, facing closure; clinics unable to stay open in rural areas and downstate areas; and to have nursing homes close as well? Why would they be for such a thing? Because they had an overriding determination to make sure that tax breaks were extended for the wealthiest people in America. That was what is behind all of it. Why did they want to cut \$900 billion from Medicaid? So they could give it in tax breaks primarily to wealthy people.

Now, they dispute it when we say that they go primarily to wealthy people. Let me give you an example. A family making \$35,000 a year, barely getting by, how much of a tax break do they get out of the big beautiful Trump budget bill? The equivalent of \$3 a week—\$3 a week. Now, wait a minute. How about those folks with big money, the Elon Musk category of individuals who are very wealthy? If the little guy gets \$3 a week, how much do these folks get a week? Six thousand dollars a week in tax breaks for the wealthiest people in America—\$6,000 a week. Does Elon Musk need that additional \$6,000 a week? What is he going to do with it? How is his life going to be improved?

I will tell you this: For the people who are struggling paycheck to paycheck trying to pay the bills, this tax break means little or nothing to them. But for the wealthiest people in America, it means more money piled on at the expense of folks losing their health insurance.

That was the choice we were given. Yes, every Democrat voted against it. I was one of them. All the Republicans voted for it, and now they have to try to explain it.

#### UKRAINE

Mr. President, moving to another topic, I will never forget sitting early one dark morning in the airport departure lounge in Vilnius, Lithuania. The date was February 24, 2022. Senator CHRIS COONS of Delaware and I had just finished visiting Lithuania, which had emerged from decades of Soviet dominance to become a thriving free-market democracy in the European Union and NATO. While we sat in the airport departure lounge and looked up at the television, we realized that there was a historic event taking place. It was a throwback to the dark days of Russian tyranny: Vladimir Putin's military effort to fully invade and topple a democratic Ukraine. We saw it happening on the screen as we sat in that airport lounge.

I had been in Ukraine in 2014 with the late Senator John McCain when Russia forcibly seized Crimea and parts of the eastern Donbas in Ukraine, but this was now a full-scale invasion in 2022, an effort to extinguish the democrat-

ically elected Ukrainian Government. A puppet Russian regime—almost comical if not so deadly serious—was part of Putin's invasion plan. It is a script any student of history knows is common in the Cold War: Putin or another Russian leader declares that he is going to protect Russian populations in a country and invades that country and tries to install a new government.

Well, he thought it would be an easy pushover in Ukraine. He was wrong. In the ensuing years, the Ukrainian people fought heroically for their freedom. They preserved their democratic government and independence from Putin's fixation with restoring the Soviet empire.

The price in Ukraine has been costly in lives and treasure and, as my Republican colleague from Iowa powerfully mentioned on the floor yesterday, also in thousands of Ukrainian children abducted and taken to be brainwashed in Russia. Yes, that has happened. The Russians went into Ukraine, and when they conquered areas, they gathered up the children, took them away from their families in Ukraine, and shipped them off to Russia to learn Russian and believe they were Russian and were never going to return to Ukraine—thousands of children. What a horrible thing to do. It is one of the things that was cited when Vladimir Putin was declared a war criminal by the international court.

But let us be clear. Ukrainian people are not backing down. They have prevailed amid these horrors against one of the strongest militaries on Earth. In doing so, Ukraine has severely weakened a formidable threat to Western security of Russian aggression, including NATO allies such as Poland and the Baltics that remain in Russia's crosshairs.

Support for Ukraine and stopping Russian aggression has been broadly bipartisan and shared with our European allies. But today, under President Trump, it is difficult to know where America stands in terms of Russia. President Trump said he could end the war in Ukraine within the first 24 hours of taking office. Now, he makes a lot of claims. That one was outlandish. All of us know that Putin is not that easy, but yet he said it.

President Trump gave repeated deadlines to Putin in February, in May, in July, and another one apparently at the end of this week. He personally called Putin multiple times this year and recently lavishly hosted him with a red-carpet greeting in Alaska. President Trump has spent important American and Presidential capital in these pursuits and has very little, if anything, to show for it.

Now, I don't criticize this President for trying to engage with Putin. I have met with my share of autocratic regimes in pursuit of greater goals. That is what diplomacy is all about. But let's be clear. After each engagement or threatened deadline from President Trump to reach a cease-fire or end the

war, including most recently after risking American prestige in Alaska, Russia's attacks on Ukraine brazenly increased, not decreased. That is right. After each personal attempt to deal with Putin, he thumbed his nose at the United States and instead started slaughtering more innocent Ukrainians. No deal was reached, and Putin stalled and reciprocated with nothing but violence and humiliation.

I believe President Trump wants to find a solution to this horrific war. I support him in that effort. But it is clear to all that President Putin is playing the United States and President Trump. Putin isn't serious, and Putin doesn't want to deal. In fact, just this week we saw him standing next to Mr. Xi of China urging a new world order at a state-managed summit with some of the world's most repressive anti-U.S. regimes, including Iran, North Korea, and Belarus. And may I add, India was part of that meeting as well.

Quite simply, Russia will only respond to increased economic and military pressure. That is a fact. My Republican colleagues in Congress know that as well. It is long overdue for President Trump and the Congress to take these steps.

We have a tough sanctions bill here in the Senate with more than 80 cosponsors. What are we waiting for? Leader THUNE should work with Senator GRAHAM to immediately call up this bill for passage. The security guarantees and weapons for Ukraine that our European allies and President Trump seem to have reached agreement on also demonstrate progress. Let's see them to conclusion. Seized Russian assets can also be used to help Ukraine militarily and economically, and we must continue to give Ukraine the military capabilities to defend itself and force Russia to the table.

Students of history remember the catastrophic miscalculation of former British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. He naively and tragically thought he made a deal with Hitler—Adolf Hitler—to secure “peace in our time.” There is still a chance for President Trump to avoid this fate of history and bring an honorable end to this war, but it will only be through clear-eyed realism when it comes to Vladimir Putin.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, shortly, I will ask unanimous consent to vote on the nominations of Jess Kramer to be the Assistant Administrator for the

Office of Water at the Environmental Protection Agency and Mr. Sean McMaster to be the Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, but first I must speak on the historic delay and obstruction that my Democrat colleagues have put toward President Trump's nominees.

So far this Congress, Democrats have not let one single civilian nominee pass by unanimous consent or voice vote. By this point in the Biden Presidency, 76 civilian nominees had been confirmed by voice vote or unanimous consent.

This is truly an unprecedented moment in this Chamber's history. For years, we have operated under courtesy and precedent to swiftly move forward a portion of the President's nominees who have bipartisan support. For example, 90 percent of President Obama and President George W. Bush's civilian nominees were passed by voice vote or unanimous consent. Even in President Trump's first administration and the Biden administration, more than half of their civilian nominees were confirmed by voice vote or unanimous consent.

Now, though, we have blanket obstruction regardless of the qualifications or bipartisan support some nominees have. As a result, President Trump's second-term civilian nominees have been subject to 120 cloture votes.

Well, somebody watching from West Virginia might not know what that means. That means obstruction, time delay, and inability to get nominees through.

That is 29 percent more than the total of all of the cloture votes for nominees in the first 200 days of the Obama, Trump, and Biden administrations combined.

These hurdles have led to these nominees averaging 94 days between nomination and confirmation in the first 200 days of President Trump's second term. That is 24 days longer than President Biden's nominees, 40 days longer than the nominees in President Trump's first term, and 53 days longer than President Obama's first-term nominees.

Regardless of the reason for obstruction that our Democrat colleagues have, refusing to place well-qualified nominees in Agencies where they can be responsive to all in Congress and help administer programs with congressional oversight and accountability is shortsighted and counterproductive.

So I would like to take a moment and speak about two well-qualified nominees I mentioned that have passed out of my Environment and Public Works Committee with bipartisan support but have been waiting for months literally for consideration on the Senate floor because of dilatory tactics.

First is Jess Kramer. She is the nominee for the Office of Water at the Environmental Protection Agency. Jess has 13 years of experience advocating for clean water at both the State and Federal levels, as well as in

the private sector and is exceptionally qualified to lead EPA's Office of Water.

Jess was voted out of the EPW Committee with a bipartisan vote of 15 to 4 in April. That was 148 days ago.

She has built a career crafting practical, bipartisan solutions to improve water policy and ensure that communities have access to safe and reliable drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.

During Jess's time working for me on my EPW Committee staff, she played a role in shaping the water provisions in the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, securing historic investments to modernize drinking water and wastewater systems, remove lead service lines, and to address emerging contaminants.

Beyond her experience on Capitol Hill, she has served in both State and Federal roles as well as in the private sector, advocating on behalf of water systems to ensure continued infrastructure investments and smart, achievable regulations.

She understands that environmental protection and economic growth can go hand in hand, and she knows how to ensure regulations are clear, fair, and based on science.

Jess is exactly the serious civil servant all Senators and the American people should want in place now.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 89, Jessica Kramer to be an Assistant Administrator of the EPA; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, on April 9, I voted for Ms. Kramer in the Environment and Public Works Committee.

Since then, the EPA has devolved into a cesspool of fossil fuel corruption. As ranking member of EPW, in my constitutional oversight capacity, I have sent 12 oversight letters to EPA asking for documents and communications, as is my duty and my right—also several QFRs. As of July, when we went through the closing nominations exercise, I had received substantive responses to precisely zero of those 12 letters.

So prior to that August recess, we explored a deal to include Ms. Kramer in the noms package for pre-August recess action if we could get the substantive oversight responses we were due on 4—4—of the 12 topics. These were EPA's grants freeze, Administrator Zeldin's false statements about the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, EPA's plans to rescind the endangerment finding, and EPA undoing the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program at industry request.