

more than 150 qualified nominees who have already been successfully approved through Senate committees. These nominees are critical to our Nation's future, our Nation's success, our Nation's progress, as well as our safety and security.

So let's take a look at some of the important roles that the Democrats have said: Nope, we are going to filibuster all of them. One is the Principal Deputy Administrator for the National Nuclear Security Administration. Another is the inspector general for the Central Intelligence Agency. Many are Ambassadors to our NATO allies. Then there is the Deputy Trade Representative. Even the Director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center is being frozen out by Democrat obstruction. Every one of them is qualified because every one of those individuals has received bipartisan committee support, Republicans and Democrats voting for them after their hearings in the committee. Yet CHUCK SCHUMER, the Senate minority leader, is blocking critical nominees because he opposes President Trump, and he has done it at every step along the way.

Democrats failed to defeat President Trump in November at the ballot box, so instead they are trying to sabotage his team right here on the Senate floor. When Democrats filibuster nominees, they don't even bother to debate their qualifications—simply delay for the sake of delay and obstruction.

Our Senate committees have done their jobs on all of these nominees. Every one of these nominees that is being held up here on the Senate floor, every one of them has appeared at hearings in committee; they have answered a barrage of questions from Senators; they passed FBI background checks; they cleared Senate ethics investigations; and they have passed out of committee; many and every one that we are going to be voting on in this group this week had bipartisan support.

Let's be clear what that means. Democrats here on the floor, CHUCK SCHUMER, are blocking nominees whom Members of their own party already said: Yes, these are qualified; let's get them on the job.

This is unprecedented, and it is wrong.

Now, Democrats are free to vote no on nominees. That is OK. But an all-out obstruction weakens our country and wastes the Senate's time.

Don't take my word for it. Let's listen to what one of the Senators on the other side of the aisle said in 2013 when Barack Obama was President. That was Senator ELIZABETH WARREN from Massachusetts. She came to this very floor, stood over there at that very desk, and said:

Without a government that was staffed, justice would not be established, our common defense would be threatened, and the blessings of liberty [that] we hoped to secure through our laws would go unfulfilled.

That was 2013 and a different President. Well, what changed? Well, what

changed is that in November, Americans voted to get America back on track, and they elected Donald Trump as President to do it. Democrats' response was to shut down the Senate nomination process and to stop Senators from doing the people's business.

Today, Republicans are taking decisive action, and we are going to start voting on that in a few minutes. We are going to break the Senate's procedural logjam. We are returning to the long-established traditions and principles of the Senate.

Tomorrow, the Senate will vote on 48 nominees together in a single group. Each and every one of them has received bipartisan support in Senate committees. We are not going to stop there, though. Over 100 more nominees will be ready for confirmation by the end of this week—get that process moving.

It is time for the Senate to clear the nominations backlog and clear it quickly, and so we will. That way, the Senate can get back to the work of legislating, of working on behalf of the American people. We have important legislation to consider. We have appropriations bills. We have the National Defense Authorization Act, the farm bill, legislation to make our cities safe from violent criminals.

Senate Republicans are going to continue the work of the American people. We are going to continue to work to get America back on track.

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.

Mr. MULLIN. 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.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, and the provisions of S. Res. 377 (119th Congress), do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Executive Calendar Nos. 89, 105, 107, 121, 122, 123, 124, 132, 133, 135, 136, 137, 139, 141, 142, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 161, 177, 180, 185, 251, 276, 277, 278, 279, 283, 285, 289, 290, 297, 298, 303, 305, 324, 344, 346, 352, 356, 362, 365, 149, 286, 302, 350, en bloc.

John Thune, Bernie Moreno, John Kennedy, Roger Marshall, Pete Ricketts, Mike Crapo, Bill Cassidy, Shelley Moore Capito, Jim Banks, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Rounds, John Cornyn, Tim Sheehy, Kevin Cramer, Eric Schmitt, John Barrasso, Cindy Hyde-Smith.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the mandatory

quorum call under rule XXII has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the en bloc nominations provided for under the provisions of S. Res. 377 shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO: The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE).

The yeas and the nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 48, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 522 Leg.]

YEAS—51

Banks	Fischer	Moran
Barrasso	Graham	Moreno
Blackburn	Grassley	Mullin
Boozman	Hagerty	Murkowski
Britt	Hawley	Paul
Budd	Hoeven	Ricketts
Capito	Husted	Risch
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Collins	Johnson	Schmitt
Cornyn	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cramer	Lankford	Sheehy
Crapo	Lummis	Sullivan
Cruz	Marshall	Tillis
Curtis	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	McCormick	Wicker
Ernst	Moody	Young

NAYS—48

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Baldwin	Hirono	Sanders
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Coons	Lujan	Smith
Cortez Masto	Markey	Thune
Duckworth	Merkley	Van Hollen
Durbin	Murphy	Warner
Fetterman	Murray	Warnock
Gallego	Ossoff	Warren
Gillibrand	Padilla	Welch
Hassan	Peters	Whitehouse
Heinrich	Reed	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Lee

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 48.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

VOTE ON MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted "yea."

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 524 Leg.]

Heinrich	Murphy	Shaheen
Hickenlooper	Murray	Slotkin
Hirono	Ossoff	Smith
Kaine	Padilla	Van Hollen
Kelly	Peters	Warner
Kim	Reed	Warnock
King	Rosen	Warren
Klobuchar	Sanders	Welch
Luján	Schatz	Whitehouse
Markey	Schiff	Wyden
Merkley	Schumer	

[Rollcall Vote No. 523 Leg.]

YEAS—47

YEAS—51		
Banks	Fischer	Moran
Barrasso	Graham	Moreno
Blackburn	Grassley	Mullin
Boozman	Hagerty	Murkowski
Britt	Hawley	Paul
Budd	Hoeven	Ricketts
Capito	Husted	Risch
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Collins	Johnson	Schmitt
Cornyn	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cramer	Lankford	Sheehy
Crapo	Lummis	Sullivan
Cruz	Marshall	Thune
Curtis	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	McCormick	Wicker
Ernst	Moody	Young

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Baldwin	Hirono	Sanders
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Coons	Luján	Smith
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Fetterman	Murray	Warren
Gallego	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	

NOT VOTING—1

Lee

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas are 52; the nays are 47. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Cloture having been invoked pursuant to the provisions of S. Res. 377, the nominations listed therein are pending en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 224

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from further consideration and that the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 224; further, that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, allow me to say some things.

As chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, I oppose this measure.

Like everyone on this floor, we want—we all want the conflict in Gaza to end as quickly as possible. The reality is, Hamas has the ability to do so right now by releasing all the hostages and immediately laying down their weapons.

Let me say that again. We can have a cease-fire immediately, but it takes Hamas to do it. Hamas refuses to do so.

Hamas has the duty to do this. They started this. The entity that started this needs to end it, and they can end it by simply stopping the fighting and releasing the hostages. They refuse to do that and continue constant attacks. They have the duty to start this cease-fire.

One of the things that this measure does that I object to vehemently is the fact that it does not underscore the fact that all of this is the fault of Hamas. Every starvation, every injury, every death, every single thing that happens in this conflict is the fault of Hamas.

On October 7, when this invasion by Hamas started, Israel was doing nothing to deserve this. Instead, Hamas invaded the country. They killed 1,200 people. They took 251 hostages.

If that wasn't enough, the torture that they committed on that day was horrific. For those of you who haven't seen the film of what they did, I

NAYS—52

Banks	Graham	Mullin
Barrasso	Grassley	Murkowski
Blackburn	Hagerty	Paul
Boozman	Hawley	Ricketts
Britt	Hoeven	Risch
Budd	Husted	Rounds
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Collins	Justice	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Sheehy
Cotton	Lankford	Sullivan
Cramer	Lummis	Thune
Crapo	Marshall	Tillis
Cruz	McConnell	Tuberville
Duckworth	McCormick	Wicker
Durbin	Moody	Young
Fetterman	Moran	
Gallego	Moreno	
Gillibrand		
Hassan		
Heinrich		

NOT VOTING—1

Lee

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). On this vote, the yeas are 47, the nays are 52.

The decision of the chair is not sustained.

VOTE ON CLOTURE MOTION UPON RECONSIDERATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question now occurs on the motion to invoke cloture on the nominations en bloc provided under the provisions of S. Res. 377 upon reconsideration.

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Utah (MR. LEE).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 52, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 525 Leg.]

YEAS—52

APPEALING THE RULING OF THE CHAIR

Mr. THUNE. I appeal the ruling of the Chair and ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is, Shall the decision of the Chair stand as the judgment of the Senate?

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE).

The result was announced—yeas 47, nays 52, as follows:

Banks	Graham	Mullin
Barrasso	Grassley	Murkowski
Blackburn	Hagerty	Paul
Boozman	Hawley	Ricketts
Britt	Hoeven	Risch
Budd	Husted	Rounds
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Schmitt
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Collins	Justice	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Sheehy
Cotton	Lankford	Sullivan
Cramer	Lummis	Thune
Crapo	Marshall	Tillis
Cruz	McConnell	Tuberville
Duckworth	McCormick	Wicker
Durbin	Moody	Young
Fetterman	Moran	
Gallego	Moreno	
Gillibrand		
Hassan		
Heinrich		

NAYS—47

Alsobrooks	Booker	Durbin
Baldwin	Cantwell	Fetterman
Bennet	Coons	Gallego
Blumenthal	Cortez Masto	Gillibrand
Blunt Rochester	Duckworth	Hassan

strongly recommend you don't look at it because you won't sleep. It is inhuman, what Hamas did to the Israeli people.

The Israeli people believe they have to defend themselves and they have to eliminate Hamas.

Worse, Hamas has used previous pauses in humanitarian aid convoys to resupply their attacks at the expense of the Palestinian people, to include looting at gunpoint the majority of the trucks that crossed into Gaza.

This is pure evil. They show pictures of women and children starving. Those women and children are starving. They are not being starved by Israel; they are being starved by Hamas. The Hamas fighters you will see in the photography are well fed, well taken care of. They steal the food that is supposed to go in there and go to the women and children, who are not fighting.

This resolution fails to even mention this threat from Hamas, much less recognize the terrorism as the root cause of this conflict.

Additionally, we should be very cautious against getting ahead of the negotiations of both our President and our democratic ally Israel, who are working diligently to resolve this conflict. In fact, the administration has worked with Israel to establish a new system of aid distribution that prevents diversions by terrorists.

More aid was delivered into Gaza last month than in almost any other month of the past year. There is no blockade. Food is getting in. Hamas is stealing it, and what they steal, they either eat or they sell.

This resolution is incomplete, it is misleading, and unfortunately it is partisan. For these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I thank the gentleman from Idaho, the chair of our Foreign Relations Committee.

I join him. I join him enthusiastically in condemning the actions of Hamas—the invasion on October 7 of Israel, the slaughter of 1,200 innocent people, the taking of hostages, and the infliction of suffering that Hamas has inflicted on Palestinians within Gaza. But the situation is much different today than it was a few months ago.

Four months ago, I stood here, and I asked for unanimous consent in support of the Senate resolution on the humanitarian disaster in Gaza. The resolution called for an end to the siege, an end to the war, and the return of the hostages.

Since then, more than 400 people have died of starvation, including more than 100 children, and that is ongoing and accelerating. Thousands more have died under bombs and bullets at aid sites themselves.

At the time, I held up this picture of Jinan Iskafi. She died in her parents' arms, the victim of a military blockade on infant formula.

Here joining Jinan are children suffering from famine conditions that

exist right now, this month—Amer, Maryam, and Shamm.

There is an ongoing famine in Gaza, and the Netanyahu government has made a self-conscious decision to deny people the food and medicine they need to survive. Women waiting for C-sections are trapped in the middle of a bombing campaign. Children are forced to watch their mothers die slowly of cancer, with no access to medicine. The hospitals they need are being destroyed.

At the same time, the Netanyahu government has begun a new military operation to take complete control of Gaza City. In Gaza City, hundreds of civilians are living under nonstop bombardment. It is about destroying buildings that are left standing, and it is a bombing campaign that has as part of its objective to force them to leave.

The Netanyahu officials in his government acknowledge that they want people to move out. They acknowledge that their campaign is in significant part about displacing people who live in Gaza City and forcing them to move elsewhere. That is at a time when those folks are living in tents; the kids aren't going to school; where they have already moved six or seven times.

The decision a family has to make is horrific: Do they move to another place where there is no place to go and they have no guarantee of any kind of safety, or is it better for them and their family to stay where they are and risk that they will be in the path of the bombing campaign?

The definition of international terrorism in our law—title 18 section 2331—includes violent actions that are intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population. And what is coercion and intimidation more than bombing where people live?

Mr. President, 46 Senators cosponsored this simple resolution months ago, and it is about trying to bring about an end to this relentless and needless suffering.

We must act. We must act so that an innocent son or daughter risking starvation does not starve. We must act to save someone's mother or father from a bomb dropped in Gaza into a place that is already unlivable. And we have to act as a body to do everything we can to end this war.

Now, the objection that my colleague made is about Hamas stealing food, and there is no doubt Hamas is stealing food. They care nothing about the Palestinians living under their oppression. But there is also no doubt that the Israeli Government, self-consciously, has restricted the aid that is necessary to get in, has interfered with organizations that were delivering aid, and it is resulting in an extension of the suffering.

Wars are terrible, not always avoidable. But after the horrors of World War II, we had, as part of the international community, the Geneva Conventions. It stated that collective pun-

ishment is a war crime; militaries would not be any longer allowed to use food as a weapon in order to press a battlefield advantage. And war may not be avoidable, but those waging war have limits on what they can do in waging even a just war.

So this is not just about Gaza. If we relinquish our commitment to the Geneva Conventions, we reopen society's acceptance of "anything goes" in causing the suffering of innocents to achieve some military advantage. We do not want to go there.

My colleagues have also objected to the declarations of famine, even though that is the declaration that experts—and I say "experts." It is people who have as their goal and life's work to try to feed people who are desperately in need of nutrition.

In order to hold that the children are not suffering, we would have to completely discount the consensus of every humanitarian expert and agency in the world, the organizations that in many cases were founded with the significant help of bipartisan efforts here in this U.S. Congress. I am talking about the World Food Programme, about UNICEF, about the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, about Mercy Corps, about Doctors Without Borders. All of these organizations have documented the devastating starvation. So this is not a question of whether there is starvation or there isn't.

And yes, there can be fault, as the chairman indicated, with Hamas and the role they play, and I condemn that. But there is a significant actor here, and that is the Netanyahu government. When they bar aid trucks from going in, that leads to hunger, starvation, malnutrition, and lack of medicine for people who desperately need it.

I do want to thank folks who are continuing their efforts to do anything they can to help feed these starving kids in Gaza—the Catholic Relief Services, Refugees International, Friends Committee, Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Amnesty International, MedGlobal, Human Rights Watch, Norwegian Refugee Council, HIAS, CARE, and the dozens of faith-based organizations—for being here and always being available to brief Members of Congress but, more importantly, to get food to folks who desperately need it.

This resolution is going to be rejected today with the objection presented by the chairman, but from my perspective, we can't reject the facts because the facts won't be rejected in history books. Kids and innocent Palestinians are starving. We have seen enough to know that, right now, Prime Minister Netanyahu is leading a policy of mass, forced displacement. People are going from one place to another with whatever it is they can carry on their backs or in their arms. When they go to one place, they are displaced yet again, and there is active discussion about having all of the Palestinians out of Gaza itself. They are being

pushed by starvation, by bombing, and by shelling. That, in addition to the restriction on aid that has been imposed by the Netanyahu government, is shocking.

We know that the Netanyahu government's rules of engagement—and, by the way, using American bombs that are used in ways that have grossly disproportionate civilian casualties—over 64,000 people in Gaza already killed, many women and children. Nearly 20,000 children are dead. Some experts define these actions as ethnic cleansing. Others suggest it is genocide. And that includes, by the way, many Israeli experts, former intelligence and military officials and organizations: B'Tselem, Physicians for Human Rights—Israel, Combatants for Peace. They have said that what they see is genocide.

There are many labels that could apply to what is happening in Gaza today. Whatever label is used—a war crime or crimes against humanity or ethnic cleansing or genocide—one thing is clear: This must end. It is not about just giving a name or a label; it is about saving lives. The United States has a unique role because of the close relationship our country has had to Israel and the close relationship that our President has to Prime Minister Netanyahu.

And what matters the most are the actions we all take to make this suffering end. And that can end with a secure and democratic State of Israel, but it also must acknowledge that what is occurring has to stop because so many innocent people are victims of these bombs, of this starvation, of this forced displacement.

The Senate today can demand an end. I hope my colleagues will join me in passing this resolution.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). The Senator from Michigan.

FEDERAL DEFICIT

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, before we broke for the August recess, I came to the Senate floor to sound the alarm on our rising national debt and unsustainable fiscal trajectory. Today, I am here to continue this discussion and remind this body of the dangers we face if we do not change course.

In fact, just last week, the Congressional Budget Office announced that our Federal deficit this year alone has already surpassed \$2 trillion. If that holds, it will be the third largest deficit accrued in a single fiscal year in U.S. history, behind only the first 2 years of the COVID pandemic. To further put it into perspective, this debt has grown by \$700 billion in just the 6 weeks since I spoke about this issue on the floor. That trajectory is incredibly alarming.

So, in this case, time is money, and time is running out. And as we approach our next government funding deadline, it is important that we look back on how we got to this point and what we can do about it. Let's look

back. On September 30, 1996, Congress did something that no Congress had done in 30 years: It passed all 12 appropriations bills before the start of the next fiscal year. One year later, Congress built on that success by working with then-President Clinton to enact the Balanced Budget Act and set enforceable budget caps.

And what occurred after this series of bipartisan, commonsense cooperation: a 4-year period of budget surpluses. During that time, our economy grew, unemployment and inflation rates reached their lowest levels since the 1960s. Unfortunately, that was the first time since 1969 that our country had experienced a budget surplus, and unfortunately we have not achieved it since.

But the moral of the story is that progress is possible when we set politics aside, work in a bipartisan way, and enact commonsense solutions that benefit all of us.

Unfortunately, we did not stay on that bipartisan, fiscally responsible path for very long. So let's take a look at what happened next. In 2001, Congress and President George W. Bush enacted a series of tax bills. I certainly believe that a good tax bill is one that provides relief to middle-class families, which are the backbone of our economy, and ensures that everyone pays their fair share.

But the tax cuts passed during the Bush era did just the opposite, largely benefiting the highest income earners in our country, and in the process increased the Federal debt by trillions—trillions—of dollars. In fact, in just 3 years, these tax laws caused our country to double the amount of debt that it had accumulated since our Nation was founded, putting us on a worse financial footing when we later faced two major wars and a global financial crisis.

After the 2008 financial crisis, many, including myself, knew that we had to take action to restore fiscal stability, and in the following years, Congress pursued well-intentioned efforts to put us on a better financial path, from attempts to limit deficit spending to identifying fraud, waste, and abuse. But unfortunately, once again, politics got in the way.

Republicans threatened to default on our debt rather than come to the table, and this reckless approach led to a permanent extension of the Bush tax cuts and the first of what would be three downgrades—three downgrades—to our country's Federal credit rating.

Fast-forward to 2017 when, instead of working with Democrats to enact responsible tax reform, Republicans followed the same old, tired script. They pushed through a partisan law that benefitted the wealthiest Americans and—you guessed it—added \$2 trillion to the national debt. And like the Bush tax cuts, it left us unprepared as a country when we faced a generational public health crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic left our country in shambles,

with millions of people losing their jobs and shuttering hundreds of thousands of businesses all across our country.

Congress appropriately stepped up, passed several pieces of legislation to support American small businesses and workers, and helped the country to get back on track.

But instead of having the means to pay for this essential support, we had to incur additional debt. So fast forward now to 2023. Democrats tried to right the ship by passing the Inflation Reduction Act, which made a nearly \$250 billion downpayment on our national debt while improving energy security, lowering prescription drug costs, and creating a more equitable tax code.

This was the first legitimate effort to reduce the deficit since the Budget Control Act passed 11 years earlier. But, unfortunately, my Republican colleagues reversed course again by passing the "Big Beautiful Mess" earlier this summer.

Not only did this bill that was passed here this past summer kick millions of people off their healthcare and make it harder for families to put food on the table by cutting food assistance, it also added—let's hear this—it also added \$3.5 trillion to the Federal deficit.

For those doing the math at home, after our 4-year run of surpluses in 2001, the national debt stood at \$5.8 trillion. Today, we stand at more than \$37 trillion, all because my Republican colleagues are seemingly convinced that giving tax cuts to the ultrawealthy will, somehow, magically help the Nation.

But time and time again, we have seen the same script yield the same results. This approach simply does not work. Since 2001, \$31.6 trillion has been added to our total debt, and thanks to the "Big Bad Bill," that total is about to get supercharged.

It won't stop there.

Later this month, this body will once again be faced with an impending fiscal challenge funding the Federal Government. In doing so, it used to be the bare minimum requirement of Congress. The expectation of most Americans is we just pass the bare minimum and do that and fund the government. It has now become an annual struggle.

I stand ready to work with Republicans to pass a true bipartisan—true bipartisan government funding bill, one that ensures vital programs remain funded and that our government remains open. Failure to do so will mean economic catastrophe and a continuation of the trends of the past 30 years that we have just walked through.

We can't let that happen, and we must work to end these harmful patterns before it is too late. Working together on the upcoming fiscal package can be that start.

If the past three decades have shown us anything, it is that there is precedent for how to put our country on a more sustainable financial path. We

did it in the late 90s, and we even did it in the early 2010s when we came to several bipartisan compromises. But if we are going to solve this, it is going to take real political courage.

The roadmap is certainly there. Now it is just up to each and every one of us to follow that map.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

UKRAINE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, with me today is one of my colleagues from my Senate office, Ms. Erin Jarnagin.

I hate having to put this picture up. Let me tell you why I am putting it up. Washington, I think we can all agree, is a unique place. Some might call it unusual. Some might even argue and make an argument persuasively that normal in Washington, DC, is just a setting on the clothes dryer.

We have a deep-seated propensity in Washington, in the Federal Government, to look reality in the eye and to deny it. Sometimes that is dangerous. That is what is happening in Ukraine. We are looking reality in the eye, and we are denying it, and it is dangerous. And it is not fair to Ukraine. It is not fair to America, and it is not fair to anybody on God's green Earth that cares about freedom.

This is a picture of people in Ukraine burying their dead. And it is not pretty, but it is real. Now, for 8 months, President Trump has tried to talk to President Putin in Russia—8 months. And for 8 months, President Putin has made all kinds of promises—a lot of pretty words, a lot of play-acting—and he has done none of what he said he would do.

He has played—“he” meaning President Putin. He has played America like a banjo—like a banjo. President Putin says he wants peace, but he doesn't, and we know that now. That is what I mean when I say we have got to just look reality in the eye and accept that.

President Putin is not going to want peace until the costs of war are greater than peace. It is just that simple. For someone who has blood under his fingernails, for someone who has Stalin's taste for death—and I am, of course, referring to Putin—it is simply a cost-benefit analysis.

Does the benefit of continuing the war outweigh the cost? That is just a fact.

We are going to have to do something if we all want peace—and we all say we do, including the people of Ukraine. They don't want peace at any price—neither do I—but we all want peace. I know President Trump wants peace.

But in order to get peace and to get Putin to negotiate seriously, we are going to have to increase the costs and make the cost on him of prosecuting the war greater than the benefits of him being able to continue to do it.

Now, how do we do that? One option is sanctions. Putin has completely transformed Russia. Russia had—before the war, had some tendencies toward—

I don't want to overstate this, but I want to be fair—toward a democracy. At least, they got to vote, and not every vote was rigged. But that has all been changed.

Putin has turned Russia into a total authoritarian state. He controls the media. If you disagree with him, you go to jail. That is why you don't see much dissent. That is why you see virtually no dissent.

If you are his enemy and he thinks you have become too problematic, he just kills you—just poisons you. Russia today is as autocratic as China, and their security—their surveillance of their people—is just about as pervasive.

So Russia has changed. Putin has converted Russia into a war economy. That means that most of the GDP—not all of it but most of it, because people have to still live—but most of the GDP in Russia, much of it, is devoted to war, manufacturing weapons, paying money to people to go fight.

It is very expensive, and Putin affords it by selling oil. In fact, 40 percent of Putin's cash flow—the only way he has been able to prosecute this war is by selling oil. And one way to get him to the table is to cut off his cash flow. The only way to cut off his cash flow is to cut off his oil sales.

One way of doing that would be sanctions. Just say to people throughout the world, if you buy Russian oil, then you are no longer going to be able to do business with the United States of America and you are no longer going to be able to use the U.S. dollar. That is what President Trump has talked about doing.

But as you know, President Trump has also said—and I certainly see his point of view—if I am going to do it on behalf of America, by God, Europe's got to do it because they are the ones most at risk. And he said: I am not going to do sanctions and pass the bill that over 80 of us have joined here in the Senate—the President said, I am not going to do sanctions until all the Europeans do sanctions and stop buying Russian oil.

I understand where he is coming from, as I said.

The problem with it is you have some European countries—one is Hungary, another is Slovakia—they tend to be more aligned with Russia than anybody else in the European Union, and they buy oil, and it is going—from Russia, and it is going to take a while to convince them to stop it. It is going to take months.

Meantime, Putin is launching 800—not 80—800 drones and 800 missiles a night at the Ukrainian people, and he is not just aiming that weaponry at the Ukrainian soldiers. He is destroying the civilian population, the infrastructure. He is killing people.

In fact, it is escalating. The President met with Putin in Alaska, as we all know, and made a bunch of promises and completely reneged. And all we have gotten from that meeting is 800 missiles and drones a night.

So if sanctions are not going to work for now, it is going to take several months for us to work that out, what can we do? Well here is what I think we ought to do—and I am introducing legislation to do this. Joining with me will be Senator GRAHAM. It will be bipartisan legislation—Senator GRAHAM, Senator BLUMENTHAL, Senator WHITEHOUSE. There will be others who will join in the legislation. And we are going to move this legislation. We are going to move it.

We are going to seize Russian assets if our legislation passes, and we are going to give those assets to Ukraine to prosecute the war. Here is what I am talking about. Just about every country in the world has assets in other countries. They don't just keep all their money in their own country.

Oftentimes, those assets are liquid assets, and many times they are called foreign exchange reserves. You have probably heard that term, “foreign reserves.” They are used in trade to convert from one currency to another.

When the war—when Putin attacked Ukraine, Russia had \$300-plus billion—some say it is as high as \$320 billion—of assets in Europe and the United States; most of them are in Europe. About 90 percent of those assets are in Belgium, in Brussels. Some are in France; the rest are in the United States.

We are talking cash here. They originally were in debt securities, but we are talking cash now. There is over \$300 billion of cash that the United States and our European allies froze that belongs to Russia.

It has been sitting there, and it has been invested basically in money markets, and we have been sending the interest to Ukraine to help them fight the war. But we have left the principal, the \$300 billion a month. We haven't seized it; we just froze it.

The time has come to seize it. And I understand the arguments against it. Some in Europe will argue: Well, it will break international law. I get it. Russia has already broken international law. Russia has already seized European companies. Russia seized over \$400 million cash from JPMorganChase accounts they had in Russia. So Russia isn't bothered by international law. It is a violation of international law for them to have invaded Ukraine and to be massacring these people.

But I get it. We want to follow the rules even if Russia doesn't. But the time has come to look reality in the eye and no longer deny it, to admit it.

If our legislation passes, here is what we will do. We will seize that \$300 billion—no longer freeze it; we will seize it. We will give it in tranches, in smaller amounts as they need it, to Ukraine. Not all \$300 billion—we are still working on language but not all \$300 billion at once. We will give it to Ukraine in tranches.

Ukraine can use that money to buy their own drones and to buy their own missiles. Ukraine can use that money

not to kill Russian civilians, but Ukraine can use that money to buy missiles to take out every single refinery in Russia, cut off their cash flow, take out every single oil refinery in Russia. Ukraine can use that money to buy missiles to take out every single weapons production plant in Russia—every single one—and make President Putin understand that there is going to be a cost for him prosecuting this war.

We need to do that while we are working out what I think will be equally as effective—maybe more effective—this issue of sanctions, but we need to do it now because we can't wait months and months and months until we get the sanctions issue worked out.

So if our legislation passes—we will have to get the permission of our friends in Europe, but we have talked with many of them, and I think they will agree—we will give Ukraine an influx of \$300 billion—no taxpayer money from an American will be spent on this. This will all be Russian money. We are going to level the playing field. We are going to see what Mr. Putin is made of.

Now, I want to be clear—and I hope the White House is listening to this. I want to emphasize it: We are not spending any American money. This is Mr. Putin's money.

I know some people are worried about upsetting him, but he is not like the rest of us. He is not. He purely looks at this from cost and effect. Human life doesn't matter to him. We are going to make it very, very costly—if we do this—for him to prosecute that war.

I want to end on this note: Look, the American people I know are tired of overseas wars. I am tired of them. I know how people feel. I don't want the United States of America to be the world's policeman. I don't. But do you know what? I don't want Putin to be the world's policeman either. I don't want President Xi in China to be the world's policeman either. I don't want the Ayatollah in Iran to be the world's policeman.

Let me tell you what is going on here. The Presiding Officer knows this. We see it in classified information and nonclassified—unclassified information. And you can surmise it if you follow the news. Xi in China, Putin in Russia, and the Ayatollah in Iran are working together. Putin couldn't prosecute this war without China.

China sends infrastructure materials and technology every single day to Russia that can be used for civilian uses but also for military uses. China buys Russian oil to give them the money to run their weapons plants in Russia.

Putin and Xi and the Ayatollah are working together. The quarterback, in my opinion, is Xi; it is not Putin. And here is their goal: Their goal is to have Putin dominate Central and Eastern Europe, to have the Ayatollah dominate the Middle East, and Iran control the Middle East. Thank God for Israel. Israel has caused them to put that part of their plan on the back burner.

Their other objective is to have China dominate the Indo-Pacific, do whatever they want, and be free to roam, as they are doing as we talk today, in Sub-Saharan Africa and South America. And I am going to tell you, that is not a world that is safe for freedom. That is not a world that is safe for democracy.

This fight in Ukraine is not just about Ukraine. It is not. It is about the Indo-Pacific. It is about Finland. It is about Poland. It is about Sub-Saharan African countries. It is about South America and our hemisphere.

So I hope the Senate will pass our bill. We are going to move it. If you object to it, stand up in front of God and country and say so. But we have got to do something.

I can promise you, with \$300 billion of new capital—none of which will be American taxpayer money—Ukraine can buy some missiles and get Mr. Putin's attention, and he will be inviting us to a summit, and he will be paying for lunch.

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

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

CANCER RESEARCH FUNDING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, this week, there are advocates here in Congress with the American Cancer Society to advocate for cancer research and prevention. This is lifesaving work, and no one does it better than our researchers.

In my home State of Washington, we have a lot of incredibly smart people who have been making a lot of incredible breakthroughs for patients, and we have a lot of passionate advocates who have been fighting to support their work. I have lost track of how many times I have visited the Fred Hutch Cancer Center, but every time, I am just blown away by the work they are doing. And they aren't the only ones.

This isn't just about advancing science though. It is about saving lives and finding new treatments and therapies and cures that give hope to help patients fighting for their lives.

Cancer research has a long history of bipartisan support here in Congress. But some of my colleagues across the aisle seem to need a reminder and a wake-up call because under President Trump, we have seen some reckless moves to undermine medical research, including cancer research. Research funding has been pulled without reason, without warning, and without any thought for the consequences.

This administration has tossed clinical trials into chaos, promising cures into limbo, and threatened to abandon our historic global research and leadership in medical research. Just this

week, a new report in the New York Times detailed how research into a rare pediatric brain cancer was totally upended because Trump yanked the funding. That research is halted and that researcher is forced to move on to topics that don't rely on NIH funding.

It is worth remembering, for many of our rare, deadly diseases, cures are not viewed as a payday for private investors, which makes NIH not just the best hope for finding a cure but the only hope for desperate patients, at least before Trump came along and stopped funding.

And that new article, which details other research Trump has sidetracked as well, is just scratching the surface of how bad this is. I have heard firsthand from researchers who have seen their work disrupted and students who are considering leaving the United States to continue their studies.

I have also received heartbreaking updates from patients, like a mom in my State fighting colon cancer who had her shot at a critical clinical trial taken away by Trump's chaotic, illegal funding cuts. And now, R.F.K., Jr., has cut off all Federal funding for mRNA research, one of the most promising new technologies for cancer treatments. This is so damaging.

In addition to supporting the research that finds new cures, we also need to make sure patients can actually access and afford those cures. That means we have to protect health coverage that helps cancer patients get care. That is why I am fighting to undo damaging Medicaid cuts Republicans passed and to extend the healthcare tax credits that are helping millions of families afford coverage right now.

We have to make a strong case for cancer research and prevention with facts, science, patient stories, and our voices. And I believe speaking out can have a real impact here because when I talk to colleagues on both sides, it is clear there is consensus we should not let years of leadership fall to the wayside. In fact, in our Senate funding bill, the bipartisan bill that we passed through the Appropriations Committee, we were able to reject some of these damaging cuts and make serious investments in cancer research.

But we do have more work ahead to get these bipartisan medical research investments signed into law. I will not stop pushing for that.

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.

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, what is the status of the floor?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in a quorum call.

Mr. HEINRICH. I would ask unanimous consent to offer remarks as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in a quorum call.

Mr. HEINRICH. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

ROADLESS RULE

Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. President, when I draw a hunting tag, especially for elk, one of the first things that I do is to look at a map of the unit where I drew. I do that for a couple of reasons. I look to see where the public land is, and I also look to see where the roads are because the vast majority of time, that is where the elk aren't.

Elk need habitat security. If there is food and water and a place to securely bed on national forest land in New Mexico, and that spot is a couple of miles or more from an open road, the odds that elk live there are really, really high. So it is almost like the roadless rule was written for elk country because, in fact, it was.

And if you like to catch wild trout that have never seen the inside of a hatchery, you are probably familiar with some of the roadless refuges where these fish still thrive. In fact, 70 percent of the roadless areas in the Nation provide crucial habitat for native trout. So it is almost like the roadless rule was written by fishermen—because it was.

In fact, it was written by many hunters and fisherman, actually. One of them is, today, the President and CEO of Trout Unlimited, who served as the senior policy and communication advisor to the chief of the Forest Service when this rule was crafted back in 2001.

When my friends draw a coveted Coues deer tag in the Bootheel of New Mexico in what is a famous unit, Unit 27, where are they hunting? Chances are, they are hiking deep into inventoried roadless areas to glass for these deer that Jack O'Connor made famous when he referred to them in his writings as "the gray ghost."

So when the Trump administration advocates for eliminating the roadless rule, they are talking about endangering some of the last great wild game habitat on our national forests. These are the back-country places where we sit around a campfire under a sea of stars and pass our traditions down to the next generation of sports men and women.

Finalized in 2001, the roadless rule protects nearly 45 million acres of national forest land that belongs to each and every American. From the hazy blue peaks of the Appalachian Mountains to the imposing spires of the Rockies, from the saltwater estuaries of the Croatan National Forest in North Carolina to the towering Ponderosa Pines of the Santa Fe National Forest in my home State, across the country, many people's favorite hunting spots, their favorite hiking trails and biking routes, ATV trails, and fishing streams are in these protected roadless areas.

When the Nation debated the merits of the roadless rule 24 years ago, the Forest Service held 600 public meetings around the country. These were attended by tens of thousands of Ameri-

cans. I should know, I attended one of them. The Forest Service received more than 1.6 million comments, and over 95 percent of those were in favor of these roadless protections. You could ask a group of Americans about apple pie, and you wouldn't get a number that high. At the time, this was the largest response to a public comment request ever—ever—that any Agency had ever seen.

Fast-forward 2½ decades to today, and the Trump administration is threatening to throw the roadless rule into the dustbin of history, except this time, the process looks very different.

The administration opened the public comment period on August 19 and will close it Friday. Now, I know how slow and deliberate government can sometimes be, but there should be no shortcut to public engagement and to the democratic process. Yet a shortcut—or maybe more accurately a short circuit—is exactly what this administration has chosen.

With an under-resourced and understaffed Forest Service, I know for a fact that the resource professionals and the scientists at the Forest Service do not support eliminating the roadless rule. This is being imposed upon them by people in the White House who, frankly, have never harvested a bull elk or released a native trout or otherwise experienced the wonder of God's creation in the very lands that represent the anvil on which our Nation's character was forged.

The truth is that the roadless rule protects us from wildfires; it ensures clean drinking water for communities; and it sustains wildlife habitat for wildlife and for sportsmen.

Wildfire prevention is at the heart of why the roadless rule is so important. Eighty-eight percent of wildfires are started by human activity, and 95 percent of human-caused fires begin within a half mile of a road. You can imagine why. It is not complicated. Cars backfire. Cigarette butts get thrown out a window. Trailer chains can spark on a rock. Sometimes campfires get mismanaged. These things happen where we can get with a car or a truck, so roads vastly increase the probability of wildfires rather than reducing them.

The roadless rule specifically allows for the removal of fuels that promote unnaturally intense wildfire. This helps to create a healthier forest and reduce wildfire risk.

The bottom line is that when we build new roads in protected areas, we risk more fires, not fewer.

In States like Idaho and Utah, more than 35 percent of roadless lands have had work done to help reduce fire in those roadless areas. In Montana, almost 30 percent of roadless areas have had similar treatments.

The idea that the roadless rule somehow prevents us from taking steps to lessen wildfire risk and from affecting human communities is patently wrong and inaccurate. The reality is that the Federal Government should be spend-

ing its scarce resources to focus on protecting communities closer to roads because that is where the people, homes, and towns are.

Can I talk for just a minute about the economics of building roads in roadless areas? The Forest Service maintains a more than \$8.6 billion—with a "b"—backlog on maintenance of its existing infrastructure and roads. Why would we countenance building new roads in back-country areas with low timber values and extremely high costs when we can't even take care of the existing roads that we already have?

Beyond wildfire prevention, the roadless rule protects the water sources that sustain our communities. Many people don't know that large cities like Atlanta and Denver and Los Angeles rely on water supplies from our national forests. In fact, some 180 million people—over 68,000 communities, large and small—rely on forested lands to capture and filter drinking water. That means that the Forest Service lands are the largest source of municipal water supply in the Nation, serving over 60 million people across 33 different States.

Roadless areas actually protect the headwaters of many municipal watersheds, and that includes places like the water supply for the city of Santa Fe, in my home State. When they rescind the roadless rule, it threatens access to clean water for millions of Americans.

Now, finally, the roadless rule preserves the fish and wildlife habitat and sustains the hunting, fishing, and recreation economy. Every year, I and millions of other hunters rely on public lands to feed our souls and to feed our families. The Sportsmen's Alliance estimates that in 2022, recreational hunters alone generated \$133 billion in economic output, created 1.3 million jobs, and supported more than \$80 billion in wages alone. And this is part of a larger pattern. The Bureau of Economic Analysis calculated that the economic output of outdoor recreation in 2023 was over \$1 trillion.

If the administration builds roads in these places, we not only lose these experiences, but our economies lose their customers. It is not just me saying this; constituents across my State are saying it to me too. Michael writes from Albuquerque. He says:

[T]his seems to be rushed without full considerations of the ramifications. I do not want the health and solitude of our forests compromised by opening the door to unwanted development.

Diane from Taos writes:

Please vote to stop the plan to rescind the Roadless Rule. I lead herb identification walks in the Taos area . . . so many people come to this state to enjoy the beauty of untrammelled forest. We need to . . . stop Trump and his abuse of our public lands.

Hannah writes from Santa Fe:

Our forests need our help now more than ever. It's hard to feel so hopeless to help them these days, and I hope you will defend our forests.

So I stand here today, supported by my own experiences and supported by

the voices of constituents, to defend these forests. But I am not only defending our forests. In fighting for the roadless rule, we are fighting for protections for our roadless areas and against putting special interests first. We are fighting for stronger local economies for all and against industrial development for a wealthy few.

Gifford Pinchot was the first Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, and he once said:

The vast possibilities of our great future will become realities only when we make ourselves responsible for that future.

We are responsible for that future, and the actions that we take today will reverberate for generations to come. I am fighting for the roadless rule, and I urge you to join me.

To my colleagues in the Forest Service, I ask that you extend the public comment period for the public so that we can hear their voices.

To the American people and my constituents in New Mexico, I urge you to engage in the public commenting process and make sure that your voices are heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHMITT). The Senator from Tennessee.

MEMPHIS

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I want to say right off the top, it was truly an honor to join President Trump at the White House on Monday. He assembled Senator HAGERTY and I and some of the Federal Agencies in the Oval Office to sign an Executive order and to announce the deployment of the National Guard to Memphis.

It is going to be several Federal Agencies that are going into Memphis. Now, the reason for this is that Memphis has had the highest crime rate in the country. And for years, we have seen Democrats that have enacted soft-on-crime policies, and this has taken, truly, a tragic toll on Memphis. In many parts of the city, Memphians cannot walk outside without fear of being mugged, robbed, carjacked, murdered.

And what we know is this: Memphis, TN, is a historic city. It has a very rich cultural history. And it is also the logistics hub of our Nation. We have the Port of Memphis; we have FedEx; we have I-40 that goes from the east coast to the west coast that runs right through Memphis; and we are also home to all five class A railroads.

Now, Memphis also has a lot of major corporations. FedEx is located in Memphis. It was started in Memphis and has remained there. You also have St. Jude, which is so vital to medical research in our Nation; International Paper; so many other companies are located there.

But the crime crisis in Memphis has been driven by gang violence, and it has held that city and that West Tennessee region back for about 4 or 5 years now. There are actually about 100 gangs that are there in Memphis.

So President Trump is doing his best to help work to make Memphis safe again.

Now, we have had an FBI operation that has taken place in Memphis, and this marks the next phase of what is a multipronged, multi-Agency strategy to fight this crime.

This summer, the FBI, under Director Patel, conducted Operation Viper in Memphis, and the FBI worked with the Memphis Police Department and Chief Davis. And what they did was to surge Federal resources from the FBI into Memphis and Shelby County in order to actually arrest and get indicted and try these gang leaders.

So as we go into this next phase, you are going to see additional resources come to bear. You are going to see the ATF, the DEA, Homeland Security, continued sources from the FBI, Tennessee Highway Patrol, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Marshals Service. They are all going to be there to support the Memphis Police Department.

This is going to be important to do to make certain that this crackdown on crime—making Memphis safe—is going to continue.

Now, the National Guard is a part of this, as I said, and these National Guards men and women are going to help maintain order so that the Memphis police officers can be on the street and be tracking down and arresting these criminals, getting them off the street.

We saw this strategy succeed in Washington, DC, where in just over a month, the President's crime crackdown here in our Nation's Capital brought car thefts down 36 percent; robberies were down 62 percent; homicides were down 57 percent.

Tennesseans have been applauding this success that we have seen. Memphians are applauding this. I have talked to Memphians who have been here this week, and they are so pleased to see the President's commitment so that they know this is going to be a long-term effort to make certain that we address crime.

Now, in the Senate, we have several bills that are supporting this effort. My Ending Cashless Bail in our Nation's Capital Act, which would require Washington, DC, to use the highest level of cash bail necessary for dangerous offenders as a condition of pretrial release; my Keep Violent Criminals Off Our Streets Act, which would ban the award of certain Federal funds to States and localities across the country that limit the use of cash bail; my Federal Carjacking Enforcement Act would empower Federal prosecutors to hold carjackers accountable; my Restoring Armed Career Criminal Act would reinstate an important tool for prosecutors to seek enhanced penalties against violent, repeat offenders; Restoring Law and Order Act would increase funding for law enforcement and help keep violent criminals behind bars.

We should get all of these bills across the finish line and ensure that President Trump has the tools he needs to

restore law and order in this country. We should pass these bills so that our law enforcement, our judges, our DAs have every tool they need to get these career criminals, these gang leaders off the streets in Memphis, TN.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EVERGREEN HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTING

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, last Wednesday, the uniquely American tragedy of gun violence struck Colorado yet again. At Evergreen High School in Jefferson County, a 16-year-old shot and injured two students and an administrator. Tonight, these three victims are still recovering, and their classmates and teachers and families are still reeling. Every elementary and middle school in the State is wondering whether they might be next.

It has been 26 years since the Columbine tragedy; 26 years since 2 gunmen murdered 13 students and a teacher and left many others physically and mentally wounded for life. Since that day, Jefferson County, CO, has done what no community should ever have to do: They have built some of the strongest systems in the Nation to prepare for and respond to mass shootings at their schools.

At Evergreen, teachers acted so quickly that when the shooter tried door after door, looking for students and teachers, he couldn't reach a single classroom. Law enforcement arrived on the scene in under 2 minutes and located the shooter in fewer than 5. Every single one of us should be grateful to every teacher, administrator, first responder, and student who acted with courage at Evergreen High School. Their bravery saved countless lives, and they now stand as a national example of how to respond to one of these terrible situations.

Mr. President, it should never have to be this way. I remember Columbine as if it were yesterday. I was in the Houston Airport coming home from a work trip when I saw our Colorado high school flashing on the screens of every single television set in the terminal. It filled me, as it did all Americans, with horror. How could something like this happen in America?

My wife Susan was 6 months pregnant with our oldest daughter Caroline, and all I could think about was getting home to my family. But Caroline and her two sisters, Halina and Anne, like millions of other American kids, have grown up in the shadow of Columbine. They have borne witness to an endless onslaught of mass shootings. Each tragedy is piled on top of the last one during their young lives.

In the summer of 2012, a gunman walked into a crowded theater in Aurora, CO, and killed 12 innocent people and wounded 58 more. We lost sons and daughters and friends and neighbors, all full of life and full of aspiration, loved by family and loved by friends.

A few months later, Sandy Hook shook the entire Nation to its knees. Twenty first graders—twenty first graders—and six teachers were killed in mere moments.

We hoped then that Congress would finally act. I can remember that balcony in the Chamber being filled with parents and children of people who had been massacred in their elementary school, hoping against all hope that this body would do something to respond; that Congress would finally pass background checks—something that 90 percent of the American people support. As everybody knows, to our everlasting shame, we didn't. We failed to act.

And somewhere along the Nation, we became numb to these tragedies. I will never forget in 2017, after a gunman slaughtered 58 people in Las Vegas who were across the street from his hotel, I sat through 5 or 6 meetings the next day before anybody mentioned that 58 people had been killed in that mass shooting. Ultimately, 60 lives were stolen as we carried on with business as usual here in Washington. We have become numb.

But, Mr. President, for the sake of our children, we cannot be numb. We need to understand that our children never can become numb. They won't become numb. They can't move on because this is their one chance to be an elementary school student; this is their one chance to be a middle school student; this is their one chance to be a high school student. When they witness, even at a distance, even from another town or another State, children being destroyed or wounded by something like the Aurora movie theater shooting or like Columbine or like the Evergreen shooting, the fear that enters their young lives is whether they might be next. That is what they carry to school day after day after day throughout their young lives.

The result of that and the result of our inaction is that America's children carry a burden unlike any generation before them or any other country in the industrialized world. They are the generation of school metal detectors, active shooter drills, and bulletproof backpacks. They live with the constant terror that they could be next.

Colorado's children have grown up in the shadow of Columbine, and 25 years later, we are still losing this fight. And they have the right to be terrified. Gun violence is now the leading cause of death for America's kids. Think about that, Mr. President. Think about that. Gun violence is the leading cause of death of America's kids. Twenty-five years ago when Columbine happened, it was car accidents. Now it is gun violence.

When I heard that statistic, I assumed that most of those gun deaths must be accidents, but only 5 percent were—only 5 percent were. The rest were homicides and suicides and mass shootings. In other words, the leading cause of death in America, in the richest country in the world, in the greatest country in the world, is violent shootings of our own children. There is no other country in the industrialized world where that is even close.

The indifference in this body is staggering. The claim that this is somehow the price of freedom is staggering or that this is what the Constitution of the United States requires for us, to fully embrace the rights enunciated by the Founders of this country. That is incomprehensible—the price of freedom.

What about the freedom of our children, the right of our children to be able to go to school with the freedom that they are not going to be gunned down, the freedom of the knowledge to know that their classmates are not going to be gunned down or that they could go there and be next on the list? What about that freedom? That seems as fundamental as any other freedom that is articulated in the Constitution of the United States, which, after all, guarantees us our rights as citizens in this Nation, including our children.

We may have become numb, Mr. President, but our children never will because they are as evergreen as Evergreen High School. This is the first time and the last time that they will be elementary school students and middle school students and high school students. I think we need to find a way to channel their raw emotion, their confusion, their anger, their fear, and their terror and summon the will to overcome our failures—this generation's failures.

My home State of Colorado has tried to do that, and we have made progress. After the massacre at Columbine, we closed the gun show loophole, which 90 percent of the American people support. After the tragedy in Aurora, we strengthened background checks in my State. In the wake of the shooting at Club Q, we raised the age to purchase a firearm from 18 to 21. This year, Governor Polis signed three commonsense gun violence prevention laws restricting the sale of certain semiautomatic firearms, requiring retailers to keep ammunition locked, and setting age limits for gun shows.

Colorado is making progress, but States can't do it alone. We can't do it alone in Colorado—a Western State that has a majority of unaffiliated voters in our purple State; that takes pride in our hunters and our anglers and our ranchers. If we can find the will to act, so can the U.S. Congress, and for the sake of our children, we must.

With deep, deep regret, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

TRIBUTE TO CLYDE MILLIGAN

Mr. YOUNG. Mr. President:

I would do anything for my country.

If an epitaph were ever written to the "greatest generation," that would be it:

I would do anything for my country.

These words were spoken by one of the remaining heroes from that selfless age. He celebrates his 100th birthday this week, and on this momentous occasion, we owe him thanks for his service.

There he is. His story is powerful. His example is certainly worth following.

At the end of 1941, a teenage attendant was knocked down when an air compressor knocked him off his feet. He was working at Hoosier Pete filling station in Indianapolis. That blast broke windows, it tore off the roof of a room, and it cracked a wall, but it could not keep Clyde Milligan down.

Shortly after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the minor explosion at that station was forgotten, but Clyde was on his feet at a military recruiting station. What was under his feet demonstrated his devotion to this country and his belief in it at a ripe age. You see, Clyde was 16 years old, and he was a sophomore at Ben Davis High School outside Indianapolis. The legal enlistment age at the time was 18, but Clyde could not tell a lie. Nothing was going to stop him from fighting for America, though, so before Clyde walked into that recruiting office, he wrote the No. 18 on the sole of his shoe, and when the recruiting officer asked him if he were over 18, Clyde, of course, said yes.

As a staff sergeant, Clyde guarded the beaches in Virginia and Maryland. That was a dangerous duty, as those beaches were vulnerable to U-boats. This assignment was made sufferable, he said, by the dances that were held at the camp, but those evenings and any other comforts were soon just faded memories by the time Clyde deployed to the South Pacific.

He was a soldier for the 111th Infantry Regiment. He crossed the Marshall Islands, leading a squadron during the allied invasion of Kwajalein. Clyde and his men helped secure American control of that island and destroyed a link in the Japanese defensive perimeter.

For his valor, Clyde was awarded numerous honors. The one he was the most proud of was the Combat Infantryman Badge. That was a few years into a young man's life, a long time ago, like so many of the boys who were asked to and did the impossible: storming the beaches of Normandy, liberating concentration camps, and island-hopping across the Pacific.

When the war ended, Clyde returned back home. This Hoosier boy married. He was wed for many years to his late wife Marie. He worked for and then owned a small business. He dedicated himself to his community and his church. He is still spending his energy to this day on behalf of New Hope Christian Church in Whitestown, IN.

Although the war had interrupted his education, in the 1990s, Clyde—representing his fellow World War II veterans who had left school to join the fight—Clyde was awarded an honorary high school diploma.

Clyde, you can see, has lived the American dream.

Like so many soldiers, he seldom speaks about his service during the war; he seldom references the sacrifices. He has said in the past that he witnessed things while serving in the South Pacific that no teenager should ever see. What he shared about his service, I am told, was his sense of duty, his commitment to the men he led, and his respect for those he fought under.

Whether he will admit it or not—I suspect the answer is no—Clyde Milligan is one of our best. You might even call him a hero—a hero for the way he answered his country's call in a time of peril and for the way he has lived his life since the war ended—a life guided by faith, full of achievements and friendships, and, as the Bible says, years.

There have been many great generations of Americans dating back to our founding, and I trust there will be many more. The patriotism and humility of one inspires the next. So let's continue to cherish and honor our "greatest generation" and the greatest of our generation. Let's inspire this generation and the generations that follow by recognizing these standout citizens—some of them citizen warriors who helped us win World War II—so that when future Americans are called to greatness, they, too, in Clyde Milligan's words, will do anything for their country.

On this monumental birthday, we all—from the U.S. Senate back to his church in Whitestown—send him our best wishes and enduring thanks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). The minority whip.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Immigration held a hearing entitled "Another Biden Blunder: Missing Unaccompanied Alien Children and Criminal Sponsors." I attended this hearing. It certainly begs the question, Why, now that they are in control, are Senate Republicans continuing to focus on the Biden administration instead of examining the policies of this administration?

When I was chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, we held not one but two full committee hearings on the Biden administration's handling of unaccompanied children. It is a legitimate issue. We must do everything in our power to protect these kids, and that requires oversight of policies that are in place now, not stories of history.

Just look at yesterday's oversight hearing with FBI Director Kash Patel. Director Patel deflected my questions relating to his gutting of the unit in

the FBI that was investigating something known as the 764 group—an organization the FBI itself described as a "nihilistic violent extremist" group that seeks to blackmail children to perform vile acts on camera.

News reports released yesterday noted that nearly every agent on Baltimore's domestic terrorism squad was reassigned this year to work full time on immigration enforcement, forcing them to walk away from investigations of the 764 group.

This change at the FBI is dramatic in counterterrorism, in counterinsurgency—all of these areas where the FBI has expertise—and developed professionals are being told they have a new assignment: Go out and find undocumented people in the United States. There are 11 million of them. In fact, roughly 20 percent of all FBI agents reportedly have been diverted from their critical national security and public safety roles, including protecting children from extremists and traffickers, to work on President Trump's mass deportation effort.

Even worse, the data show that this administration is not focusing its immigration enforcement on the "worst of the worst," as the President says. Instead, they are picking up innocent, law-abiding people.

Just consider the recent raid of the Hyundai Metaplant in Georgia. Hundreds of agents from across the country raided this factory. The agents—many of whom work on priority counterterrorism and drug enforcement cases—did not have experience in low-priority immigration enforcement operations. They ended up arresting hundreds of South Korean nationals who were in the country to install equipment at the plant so that eventually American workers could go to work at that factory.

Now the South Korean Government is investigating human rights abuses during that raid, and construction on the facility is paused at least for another year, maybe two. Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau was reportedly forced to express "deep regret" over the incident in a meeting with his South Korean counterpart.

I have read some of the news accounts. The South Koreans are livid. Here is our government, begging them to put businesses and factories in the United States, and we raid this and take away 300 South Koreans who were there for the transition on that factory. Some of them were in shackles and handcuffs.

Americans want the immigrants who have committed serious crimes to be deported, but raiding factories, like the Hyundai factory, isn't going after criminal gangs or murderers.

The Georgia raid demonstrated that the Trump administration's priority is not really public safety but, rather, meeting White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller's arrest quotas. Mr. Miller needs a body count to slake

his insatiable thirst to punish immigrants.

Miller has ordered ICE agents to focus on arresting individuals at Home Depots and 7-Elevens. Remember the categories we were looking for, rapists, murderers, terrorists, and the criminally insane? Go to that Home Depot parking lot, right? It doesn't make sense. His targets are not in those of President Trump's infamous litany. Brown skin and a Spanish surname is good enough.

In order to meet Miller's quotas, ICE is arresting first and asking questions later. DACA holders, immigrants with lawful status, and even U.S. citizens have been caught up in this disastrous effort. Even worse, a recent U.S. Supreme Court order has paved the way for ICE raids on any employer who hires someone with an accent for a low-wage job.

I have seen the devastating impacts of these policies in my State of Illinois. People are fearful of masked men in unmarked vans who could grab them at any time because of how they look or their accent. Parents are terrified to take their kids to school, and businesses are suffering as people are scared to go to work.

Just last weekend, I was in a section of Chicago known as Little Village. The chamber of commerce appealed to me: Senator, would you come out to dinner in our neighborhood next time you are on the road and have a place to pick? We need the business.

The President is ramping up his immigration raids in Chicago in the so-called Operation Midway Blitz. This operation is not going to make Illinois or America safer. In fact, 70 percent of the immigrants detained by Trump so far have no criminal convictions. Instead, this effort will deepen the fear in our communities, making hard-working immigrant families frightened to send their kids to school, go to the hospital, or report suspicious activity to the police.

The majority of Americans do not support these anti-immigrant actions. If it is a dangerous person, they have got to be gone. But these are people who are paying their taxes and going to work and sending their kids to school and sitting right behind you in church. They are not dangerous by any means.

Immigrants have been a key part of the American success story at every level. That is why, in Illinois, including in the great city of Chicago, we embrace immigrants as members of our community who pay their taxes and help make our economy thrive and our city strong. Our Nation needs immigrants more than ever.

Just last week, I had the major farm groups in Illinois meet with me—three different groups in the same day. After they made their presentations about how tough things are on the farm because of tariffs and their inability to sell on an international basis, I said to them: I want to ask you a favor. Each

and every one of you have told me you need immigrant labor on your farms to continue operating. Will you say it publicly? Will you let America know that immigrants perform a valuable function in dairy farms, livestock operations, orchards—farms of all kinds? They are an important part of the workforce.

Our Nation needs immigrants now more than ever. Look at the numbers. If DACA is struck down, experts predict that our economy will lose an estimated \$11.7 billion each year in wages.

What was DACA? An Executive order of President Obama's based on my bill, the Dream Act, that said if young people are brought here before age 18 and they have grown up in this country with no criminal record or question about their background, they ought to have a chance to stay here without fear of deportation for 2 years at a time.

Even these young people who are complying with that Executive order and carefully making sure they file on time are being subject to deportation by the Trump administration.

Without continued immigration, the U.S. working-age population is going to shrink by 6 million by the year 2040. People like Stephen Miller would cheer that information. I am fearful of it. We need a competent, large-enough workforce—not taking jobs from current Americans but providing for their future.

As Americans retire, this could lead to a 23-percent reduction in monthly Social Security payouts for retirees. When the immigrants are not working, they are not paying their taxes, of course, and they are not paying into Social Security. They are an important part of the future of this country.

So rather than costly operations to deport hard-working immigrants with no criminal convictions, I urge my colleagues to come to the table and work with us on a bipartisan basis to reform our immigration system and secure our border in a sensible, humane way.

It wasn't that long ago that I was part of a Group of 8. Senators John McCain, LINDSEY GRAHAM, Marco Rubio, and others were joining in a bipartisan effort to build a bipartisan immigration bill. It was a good bill. It passed with over 60 votes on the floor of the U.S. Senate. The House refused to take it up, and it is unfortunate because it would have solved many of the problems which have faced all of the Presidents since.

We can do the right thing for this country: make sure that dangerous people are not part of our future but that those who want to make America a greater country, as they have over and over again, have that opportunity.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

HEALTHCARE

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to join a number of my colleagues because time is of the essence. If Congress

doesn't act to extend tax credits for the cost of health insurance, millions of Americans are going to lose their coverage and many more could see their costs go up by as much as 75 percent. And that is on top of the most recent inflation data that shows our economy is headed in the wrong direction.

Despite those numbers, everything that we have seen from this administration—from its tariff policy raising prices on cars to coffee to the passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill—or betrayal, as I call it—that ripped Medicaid away from millions of Americans to finance tax breaks for billionaires—all of those actions has made the affordability crisis for average Americans worse. For far too many American families, this growing affordability crisis includes the rising cost of healthcare. We in Congress must not let these concerns go unanswered, especially when we have the ability to act. And we have the solution to prevent healthcare costs from skyrocketing even further overnight.

That is why a number of my colleagues and I have worked in the Senate to introduce bicameral legislation that would permanently extend the enhanced premium tax credits, those benefits that allow so many Americans—our neighbors, our small businesses, our friends—who rely on that help to keep their premium costs low to be able to afford health insurance.

Extending the tax credits has been a priority, and we have been calling attention to the looming expiration of these vital tax credits since last year. In fact, three times during this past year, my Democratic colleagues and I have tried to pass our legislation to offer some real relief to working families grappling with the high cost of living. Unfortunately, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle have blocked each and every one of these efforts.

Now, this program to provide that help that families need to cover their cost of health insurance is set to expire at the end of the year, and there is no plan in sight to replace it and to help families afford health insurance. Allowing these tax credits to expire is going to harm the record enrollment in the ACA Marketplace that so many people have worked so hard to achieve, and this past year there has been record enrollment in the ACA.

Now, what does it mean for Americans if we allow these tax credits to expire? It means that 24 million Americans will see their health insurance costs go up. It means that 4 million Americans could lose their coverage entirely. And that is not an exaggeration because that is based on the non-partisan data from the Congressional Budget Office.

Now, according to a report that a number of us commissioned from the Georgetown Center on Health Insurance Reforms, eliminating these tax credits will disproportionately hurt older people, those who live in rural

areas, and small business owners—those people who can least afford to pay additional costs for their health insurance. On average, Marketplace premiums will rise by 75 percent, roughly \$700 a year. That is the biggest increase in over a decade, and this price increase affects the very people who can least afford rising costs right now.

I spoke with one of my constituents last week, Paul from Canaan. Canaan is a small town in the northern part of New Hampshire. He is one of those people who we talk about and who Georgetown University Center talked about when they talked about the impact of those cost increases on Americans. Paul's employer-sponsored insurance would be prohibitively expensive for him and his family. Not only that, it is not accepted by a lot of the providers in his area. His wife also has an autoimmune disease, and his son needs insurance coverage in order to attend the University of New Hampshire.

So that means that those enhanced premium tax credits, the benefits that we provided in Congress to ensure that families like Paul's could afford their health insurance, they have been a lifeline for him. He told me that thanks to the credits, he no longer fears that one single emergency room visit could bankrupt his family. But sadly, without those enhanced premium tax credits, not only Paul but millions of Americans will have to make difficult choices about what they can live without so they can afford health insurance. That should be unacceptable to all of us in the United States of America.

The American people are rightfully concerned about the soaring costs of healthcare coverage, and they are looking to Congress; they are asking us to work together to get this done. I am here to remind all of our colleagues—along with Senator WELCH and those of us who are speaking to this—but mostly our Republican colleagues, some of whom I know are very aware of what an issue this is for their constituents. They are also aware that the clock is ticking. Some Republicans in Congress keep saying: Let's wait. We have time to deal with this later.

Unfortunately, we now know that there is a cost to waiting. Just yesterday, the CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, estimated that if we don't act, if we wait until the end of the year to pass an extension, that 1.5 million more people will go uninsured, premiums will still go up, and waiting actually costs the Federal Government an additional \$10 billion.

So for all of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle who were so anxious to cut different aspects of our government because they want to fund their tax decrease for the wealthiest in this country, they ought to care about an additional \$10 billion that it is going to cost if we wait to address this issue. Waiting to act is going to leave more Americans uninsured; it is going to cost patients more from their hard-

earned income; and it is going to be more expensive for the Federal Government.

So while I am encouraged by some of the public reporting that several of our Republican colleagues are interested in extending the ACA enhanced premium tax credits, the time for us to act is now. The President's own pollsters have warned that not extending these tax credits would be a political catastrophe for the GOP.

I would hope that we could all agree that addressing the affordability crisis that Americans are facing because of the increasing costs of everything from groceries to rent to electricity shouldn't be partisan issues.

I know there are many of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle who understand these stakes, who are worried about what is happening with their constituents. So let's come together. Let's address the American people's concerns. Let's put aside the politics and work to keep healthcare premiums affordable. Let's support the small business owners who power local economies all across the country and create two-thirds of the jobs in America. Let's preserve this vital program that keeps Americans healthy and safe.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, the senior Senator from New Hampshire. I really appreciate her very practical presentation about a common concern that we have—Republicans and Democrats—and that is that we do no harm when it comes to the profound insecurity people are feeling about having access to healthcare for themselves, for their partners, for their kids.

And we have got real differences in this Chamber. Little introductory remarks about the One Big Beautiful Bill—I do think it is a terrible bill. I do think that we have taken money from healthcare and other areas to fund a tax cut for very wealthy people. I think it is bad for the economy and creates a lot of insecurity.

We are also having a big battle about the funding of government, which is the responsibility that we all have. And I want to be candid. I take significant issue with the President when he says: Don't even bother dealing with Democrats.

This always is a budget issue that has to involve Democrats and has to involve Republicans. If we don't talk, we don't resolve differences and we are not even in a position to do our job and find common ground. So we are in a pickle. That creates some hard feelings as we try to work through this. And I don't want to dwell on that because we do have different points of view on that.

But we have a situation here, as the senior Senator from New Hampshire described, where if these healthcare premium supports expire, every American who has come to depend on access

to healthcare through ObamaCare, which is now accepted as an important element in our healthcare system, every person on that is in incredible jeopardy.

And I know that every single Member of this Senate is very concerned about access to healthcare for the people they represent. There is no alternative for folks out there that is even being discussed if we don't continue the premium support for people who are getting their healthcare through the Affordable Care Act.

So I want to focus on this as the Senator did. I don't want to focus on the partisan differences; I want to focus on the concrete reality that a family is going to face if the Affordable Care credits expire.

No. 1, as Senator SHAHEEN said, this can't wait. The date is going to arrive; the tax credits expire; people depending on that healthcare won't have it. Twenty-four million Americans will face higher costs.

Again, I want to emphasize that is not 24 million Democratic families; that is not 24 million Republican families; it is 24 million families. It is in both our States. It is not political. It is about healthcare, which every single citizen, we want them to have it and have it be affordable.

Premiums are going to increase, on average, about 75 percent as the Senator said. One in four people who have a chronic condition are going to lose out on coverage; 3.3 million small businessowners will see their premiums increase.

I just want to stop on that point for a moment because the Senator, my colleague here, has done so much for small business, and that is because she knows, as I do and I know as you do, Mr. President, small businesses are so vital to the well-being of our community.

One of the things I have learned from my visits to small businesses is really pretty inspiring because I see those Vermont small businessowners; their employees are like family to them. The most important thing for them is to make sure their employees are doing well.

One of the things that is really important to our employers is that they can provide healthcare, but with the premiums going up like this, it is a wicked decision and discussion between the businessowner and the employees about a raise versus picking up the high cost of a premium increase. That is going to be aggravated if these tax credits expire; 1.6 million of those folks in small businesses would lose coverage.

Again, I want to make this concrete now. In Vermont, 27,000 people who rely on the tax credits will lose their health insurance. They just won't be able to afford it.

Let me give you a couple of examples of the real world here in Vermont. The annual premium increase for a 60-year-old couple in Vermont that earns

\$82,000 a year—and that is tough to get by if you have a family on that amount of money—but the premium increase is going to be \$23,000. That is a fact. That is a 335-percent increase, but that is like \$2,000 a month.

So what that says to that family is you are on your own, no healthcare.

In Nebraska, 112,000 folks rely on the Affordable Care monthly premium tax credits. The annual premium increase for a Nebraska family, a 60-year-old couple that is earning \$82,000, \$83,000 a year, \$23,000—pretty much the same as Vermont.

In California, there are 1.5 million folks relying on the ACA premium tax credit. That 60-year-old couple making \$82,000, it is going to be an additional \$17,000.

In Connecticut, 112,000 folks are going to lose access to healthcare with these increases. That 60-year-old couple with \$82,000 in income, a \$28,000 premium increase; 541 percent.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Will my colleague yield for a question?

Mr. WELCH. I will.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I think one of the things that people don't understand—and I don't know if you agree with me—is that what is going on here is that as these costs go up and as it becomes harder for people to enroll in the Affordable Care Act marketplace because of other changes that were made in that "Big Betrayal Bill," that the risk pool—a lot of healthy people don't sign up again.

And so the risk pool includes a lot more people who are sicker, who have illnesses. And as the insurance companies are looking at those projections, they are saying: Well, we got to raise rates because if we don't, we are not going to be able to cover the people that need help. That doesn't just affect those people who have those health insurance costs, but all of the rest of us are going to pay more for our health insurance too.

Would you agree that is part of what is going on? That is what we heard from Georgetown University Center on Health Insurance Reform.

Mr. WELCH. I am so glad that you brought that up because what drives everyone crazy is the so-called cost shift. A lot of our community hospitals, they get underreimbursed, oftentimes on Medicare or Medicaid. And then the employer-sponsored premiums are the only place the providers can go to cover their legitimate costs.

So there is a huge spike in the cost. If you have all these folks without healthcare and they are showing up and getting free care, then somebody has got to pay, and that is going to be the employer-sponsored and private pay.

The Senator from New Hampshire was right in pointing out we have got this broken system that we are making worse with this effort. So thank you so much for that, the Senator from New Hampshire.

I wanted to go back to these numbers too. In Alaska, 23,000 folks, they can

lose their healthcare or they are going to have a premium increase. That family with \$82,800 in income, it is \$44,000. So that is a 54-percent increase.

In Wyoming, 40,000 folks rely on the ACA tax credits. That 60-year-old couple with an \$82,000 income, their premium is going up \$37,000. That is \$3,000 a month.

In West Virginia, 49,000 folks losing. That 60-year-old couple, \$82,000 income, \$39,000 premium increase; \$3,000 a month.

What we know is that can't happen. It cannot happen. You are literally, through passivity in this U.S. Senate, where we have the option to act or we have the option to hide, the second option is sending a direct premium increase to our families, up to \$40,000 in a year for people who make \$80,000. So this happens, this is on us. If this happens, it is on us.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. WELCH. I will yield to the Senator.

Mr. DURBIN. I would like to ask, through the Chair, a basic question of my friend from Vermont.

You have been involved in politics a few years. So have I. I am trying to understand if I were a Republican Senator who voted for this kind of premium increase for people in my State, more than a handful—a lot of people in my State—how I would explain it. Do you know?

Mr. WELCH. Well, if you are a billionaire, it works out. The fact is, it can't be explained. It hasn't happened yet. This is about to go into effect if we don't act as the Senate.

Mr. DURBIN. Excuse me, Senator.

Mr. WELCH. Yes.

Mr. DURBIN. When you say it is just about to happen, is it the announcement of the premium or the actual imposition of the premium increase?

Mr. WELCH. It is the actual imposition of the premium increase. The only way we can spare this heartache—literally, taking away people's healthcare—is by extending the premium tax credits. So that is a decision this body has to make.

Mr. DURBIN. Through the Chair, you used an example of Wyoming.

Mr. WELCH. I did.

Mr. DURBIN. You said 60,000 people in Wyoming.

Mr. WELCH. Let me get that number for you but go ahead.

Mr. DURBIN. Well, I was trying to figure out if someone is making \$82,000 a year, I think that was your reference point.

Mr. WELCH. Right.

Mr. DURBIN. And they qualified for the Affordable Care Act health insurance, they currently can receive a subsidy to help with the payments based on their income.

Mr. WELCH. That is right.

Mr. DURBIN. And you are saying the change in the big beautiful Trump budget by our Republican colleagues is going to result in an increase in

monthly premiums in Wyoming of a person making \$82,000 a year of \$3,000 a month?

Mr. WELCH. That is right; \$37,000 a year, and there are 40,000 as you mentioned.

This is really about the Affordable Care tax credits that expire. This was not in the Big Beautiful Bill. The Big Beautiful Bill took a trillion dollars away from the Medicaid Program, but now we have pending before us the imminent cliff where the premium increases that were passed by this body on a bipartisan basis to help during COVID, those expire.

When that expires, those families in Wyoming are going—who are on the Affordable Care Act and who are 60 years old and they have \$82,000 in income, they are going to see a premium increase of \$37,193.

Mr. DURBIN. This is not a casual increase; this is for real.

Mr. WELCH. That is a loaded gun. It is the heart of the family and their ability to carry on. This just can't happen. It can't happen. We are the body that has the option of ignoring the hardship and the catastrophic consequences of this on the families we represent or sparing them and allowing them to continue having access to healthcare they depend on.

Mr. DURBIN. Let me ask you this question: Since we have the continuing resolution being considered, which would go into effect September 30, if we agree on one, if you took care of this tax credit issue, you could spare that family in Wyoming from a \$3,000-a-month addition to their hospitalization premium; is that correct?

Mr. WELCH. That is exactly right. That is exactly right. That is within the power. This is the wonderful thing of those of us that have this job. We have the power to do something that can help the people we represent. They need healthcare. Republican families need it. Democratic families need it. People who don't care anything about the political process, they need it. And in this country, they should be entitled to it.

We can act. It is not a partisan thing. It is not a victory for one side or the other. It is really a lifesaver for these families—the Wyoming families, the Vermont families, the Illinois families. So I urge this body to come together to do something that the people we represent—every single one of them—need and would benefit by.

Mr. DURBIN. Let me ask the Senator from Vermont his own personal experience. Mine was that last year, I decided to replace my knee—my football knee from high school—and my hip, same year.

I started receiving these projected bills and how much I might, personally, owe if I didn't have any health insurance. We are talking about thousands and thousands of dollars. Now, these were basically elective surgeries but much more than the average person has available on hand to pay a bill.

Imagine if instead of an elective surgery, I had, God forbid, broken my leg, ended up in the emergency room, and needed help with surgery when it was all over. The net result of it is a bill which most families would struggle to pay if they had no health insurance protection.

Mr. WELCH. Right.

Mr. DURBIN. This seems like the reality of the situation. It is your money or your life is the Republican proposal. We are either going to have you pay \$3,000 or more a month in premiums or you are going to have to gut it out and hope you don't get sick or don't have an accident that could cost thousands and thousands of dollars.

Mr. WELCH. Well, you know, you are exactly right because that family making \$82,000 a year, they are struggling to pay the premium as it is. If they have to pay \$3,000 more a month, most of those families are going to say they would like to but can't because they are uninsured.

I will give a story of my own. My first wife died of cancer, Senator. She had cancer for 9 years. We had terrific healthcare. She had a rare form of cancer.

One night, my car broke down, and the wrecker guy picked me up. We had a long ride. We got to talking. It turned out that his wife—and he had two kids, younger kids—had the same form of rare cancer and his wife died and we talked about that.

But there was a difference. We had insurance through the University of Vermont where my wife was a professor. He had no insurance. He was working late nights, long hours, raising these two kids by himself, and he was trying to pay off a \$335,000 medical bill. That is not right.

But that example you just mentioned or this Wyoming family or Vermont family or Illinois family, they are faced with \$3,000 a month. They don't have the money; they go without healthcare. Somebody gets sick. It is a serious illness. They get medical debt.

(Mr. JUSTICE assumed the Chair.)

They get anxiety—anxiety on top of the anxiety that always accompanies a serious illness in a family, where all of your attention, if it is your partner, if it is your child, is about your partner, your child.

On top of that, you have the incredible stress of bill collectors calling up: Where's the money? We don't have to allow this to happen. We don't, and we shouldn't.

And I just want to emphasize, it is not a Republican, Democratic deal; it is a mutual responsibility that this U.S. Senator has to the people of this country in your State and in my State.

So I urge us to get a solution. And I talked about West Virginia, the Presiding Officer's great State, where folks will face enormously high premium increases if these Affordable Care Act subsidies are expired. It will be brutal. I told the Presiding Officer about my visit to West Virginia, my respect for the coal miners, those hard-

working folks there. And I know how highly important it is to the Presiding Officer about healthcare access. So let's act as a body. Let's do it together and make certain that folks do have healthcare, just don't have the anxiety and uncertainty and the bills that are just going to cripple them. I want to thank the Senator from Illinois. I want to thank my colleagues in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Senator from Vermont as well as the Senator from New Hampshire for organizing this block. I am going just say that people have contacted me from Illinois and are scared to death about what is going to happen on October 1. This big beautiful budget bill of President Donald Trump, unfortunately, is not going to extend the tax credits available to reduce premium costs. Families are asking me: How in the world, Senator, are we supposed to pay these increased costs of thousands of dollars each month?

I don't have an answer for them, but the Senate has the answer. The Senate can change that. We can restore this tax credit. There are a lot of priorities for a lot of people, but I will tell you, if you have ever lived without health insurance, you understand it is a basic priority.

You never know tomorrow what you are going to end up paying in a medical bill, and if you aren't prepared for it, it can wipe out your savings in no time flat.

I just want to thank my colleagues from Vermont and New Hampshire for organizing this floor block.

Access to healthcare is one of the most important issues facing Americans today, and it is an issue near and dear to my heart—because I know what it is like to live without health insurance.

I will never forget being the father of a new baby, who had a serious medical condition but I didn't have any health insurance. I never felt more helpless than I did in that moment. It is a terrible feeling and something I do not wish on anybody.

Unfortunately, Republicans in Congress are preparing to subject millions of Americans to the stress-filled, sleepless nights, that come from knowing your family does not have health insurance. If Congress fails to renew the Affordable Care Act's enhanced premium tax credits before the end of this year, the cost of health insurance will spike for almost every American who relies on an ACA Marketplace plan. Increased premiums will create financial hardship for middle-income families across the Nation and cause millions of Americans to lose their health insurance.

There has been a lot of confusion surrounding these tax credits, and I want to make clear who is at risk of being affected by these cuts. More than 90 percent of families with a Marketplace plan receive the ACA's premium tax credits to lower their monthly premiums. That is 22 million Americans

who rely on these tax credits to afford healthcare.

Without these subsidies, 22 million people will see the cost of their insurance premiums rise rapidly. For most families, the cost will skyrocket 75 percent. That means that a family of four making only \$32,150 a year will see a nearly \$400 annual increase in their healthcare costs. A family earning \$64,300 will see their premiums rise to \$905 a year from \$180—more than a 400-percent increase.

The imminent expiration of these tax credits, combined with the devastating Medicaid cuts passed earlier this year by Republicans, will devastate families of limited means and hospitals. The increase in premiums will be too much to bear for many families. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that if the ACA credits expire, 4 million people will become uninsured. And that is in addition to the more than 10 million set to lose their healthcare as a result of the so-called "One Big Beautiful Bill's" Medicaid cuts.

Last night, on the Senate Floor, I shared two messages my office received from Illinois constituents who are terrified about the upcoming tax credit expiration. The first message was from Kristen, from Rochester. She is a freelance writer, who has recently been diagnosed with a long-term degenerative disease. She said, "I depend on the ACA Marketplace for insurance. Without it, one of my multiple medications could cost \$7,500. Without these subsidies, I would be unable to cover the cost of my care."

The second message was from Zach. He is a small business owner and father of four from Highland. Zach wrote, "The Affordable Care Act has been a lifesaver for my family. It would ruin us if we lost the benefits from the Affordable Care Act. It would ruin us economically and physically if we lost these big, beautiful benefits from the ACA."

These are real stories, from real people, who will be affected by the callous inaction of my Republican colleagues. But Kristen and Zach are not the only ones who are living in fear because of the upcoming expiration of these tax credits.

Melanie, from Elmhurst, wrote to my office and said, "Without the tax credit my monthly payment is unaffordable, plain and simple."

Vivien, from Evanston, emphasized that "We cannot go back to the years when millions of Americans could not afford to get insurance."

I could not have said it better. The end of the year is approaching, and my colleagues from the other side of the aisle seem uninterested in extending these lifesaving healthcare subsidies for Americans in red, blue, and purple States. I am calling on my colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, to come together on a bipartisan basis to extend these subsidies and offer families some financial relief.

Senate and House Democrats will soon introduce a bill that would keep

the government open and permanently extend these tax credits. We can do both. And we should do both. I ask my Republican colleagues to join us in these efforts. In doing so, I am reminded of something my former boss, the late Senator Paul Douglas, said after the creation of Medicare and Medicaid. He said, "We will indulge in no comments about those who came at the 11th hour to the support of the measure . . . All can share in the thrill of victory. We merely ask that we all work together to make this measure a success."

I hope my colleagues will heed his words and protect the tax credits that so many Americans rely on to afford their healthcare.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S.J. RES. 71

Mr. MORENO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at a time to be determined by the majority leader, following consultation with the Democratic leader, no later than Friday, October 10, S.J. Res. 71 be discharged from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and that the Senate proceed to its consideration; further, that there be 6 hours for debate only, with the time equally divided between the leaders or their designees on the joint resolution and that following the use or yielding back of that time, the joint resolution be read a third time and the Senate vote on the resolution.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MORENO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

WELCOMING ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I rise today to welcome to America His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of the world's second-largest Christian Church—Orthodox Christianity—which encompasses over 250 million faithful worldwide.

We in Louisiana take particular pride in welcoming His All-Holiness, given that the very first Greek Orthodox Church in America, Holy Trinity Church, was established in 1864 by Greek merchants in New Orleans. This historic church welcomed Orthodox Christians of various nationalities and backgrounds. To this day, Orthodox