

They are also trying to ax Republicans' transformational, once-in-a-generation investment in rural healthcare designed to improve the way that we deliver care to those who need it.

Republicans have advanced a clean, nonpartisan CR to keep the government funded while we continue bipartisan work on regular annual appropriations funding bills.

Democrats—well, Democrats are threatening to shut down the government if Republicans don't agree to last night's laundry list of partisan demands. I think that tells you all you need to know.

I expect the House to advance a clean CR tomorrow, and I hope—I really hope—that Democrats will come to their senses and join us in passing it. The ball is in their court.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, later today, the Senate will vote on its slate of 48 lower level nominees to the executive branch of our government—the first package of nominees we will consider this year.

Normally, confirming a slate of noncontroversial, lower level nominees like the ones in this package wouldn't merit a lot of discussion on the floor of the Senate. They would normally be confirmed in a few moments by unanimous consent or voice vote.

In fact, previous Presidents have had most of their nominees confirmed this way. George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton in their first terms each had 98 percent of their civilian nominees confirmed by unanimous consent or voice vote. George W. Bush and Barack Obama had 90 percent in their first terms in office. Then came President Trump's first term. Democrats injected a healthy dose of partisanship into the process, and all of a sudden positions that used to go by voice vote or unanimous consent were now requiring roll-call votes.

Still, both President Biden and President Trump in their first terms had more than half of their nominees confirmed by voice or unanimous consent.

Then there is this year. This year, Democrats fully broke the confirmation process here in the Senate. For almost 8 months now, Democrats have dragged out the confirmation of every one of President Trump's nominees. He is the first President on record not to have a single civilian nominee confirmed by unanimous consent or voice vote—not one.

Democrats have said that they are doing this because these are “historically bad” nominees. Historically bad? Many of the President's nominees are getting Democrat support when they come out of the relevant committee of jurisdiction. Democrats are even voting to confirm them. But despite this, Democrats have still slowed down the process literally to a halt. It is delay for delay's sake, I suppose, so they look like they are fighting.

Last week, Republicans put a stop to this and restored the Senate's long-

standing practice of confirming nominees expeditiously in batches, the way it was always done prior. That is what we are going to be doing here today.

This slate of nominees, as I said, consists of noncontroversial, lower level positions in the executive branch. Many of these positions have been filled by unanimous consent or voice vote in each of the last three incoming administrations. Almost all of them have been filled that way at least once since President Obama. So the positions themselves aren't controversial. Well, interestingly enough, neither are the nominees.

Every one of these 48 nominees was reported out of committee with bipartisan support—every single one. A significant number of them were supported by a majority of Democrats on their representative committees.

Under any other President, these would be exactly the type of nominees that we would confirm in a batch by unanimous consent or voice vote.

Democrats' obstruction is not about the quality of the nominees. Let's just put that to rest, pure and simple. It is about Democrats' utter inability to accept the fact that the American people elected President Trump.

President Trump came into office with a mandate. And like every President before him, he needs his team in place to enact his agenda. But Democrats' obstruction would have denied him that team. It would have denied the American people the change that they voted for last November, and it would have prevented the Senate from doing important work.

So far this year, we have cast more than 500 votes here in this Chamber. That is more than any Senate in recent history at this point in a Congress. But just to finish the nominees in the pipeline today would require another 600 votes if we considered them all individually, which is what Democrats have been forcing us to do since this President took office—600 more votes.

We have cast more than 500 up until now. We would have had to cast another 600 in the 3½ months before the end of the year just to get through the current pipeline. That doesn't even consider the hundreds of additional nominees who will be added to that pipeline in the coming weeks and months.

If the Senate had continued at the pace that we have been proceeding at through the month of July, there would still have been hundreds of empty desks in the executive branch on President Trump's last day in office in 2029. Think about that.

Republicans have fixed a broken process and restored the Senate's precedent that applied to previous Presidents, and that is allowing a majority of a President's nominees to be confirmed expeditiously.

I have talked a lot about allowing a President to assemble his team, but of course restoring Senate precedent isn't just about ensuring that a President

can get his team in place; it is also about making sure that the Senate is able to spend sufficient time on legislative work.

First and foremost, the Senate is a legislative body, and Democrats' historic obstruction has made it substantially more difficult for the Senate to spend adequate time on legislation. By restoring Senate precedent on confirmations, we have helped ensure that the Senate is able to fulfill all of its responsibilities.

Today is the first slate of nominees. There will be more to come. And we will ensure that President Trump's administration is filled at a pace that looks more like those of his predecessors and that this government can deliver for the American people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President yesterday, Democrats released our bill to extend government funding and meet the needs of the American people. The contrast between the Republican bill and the Democratic bill is glaring.

The Republican bill is more of the same failed status quo of Donald Trump's failed policies: more high costs, healthcare cuts, and premiums up.

Democrats have a different option. We address the crises Americans face in healthcare, in Medicaid, in inflation, and in higher costs.

The House is expected to vote on their partisan, status quo bill either later today or tomorrow. If the bill passes the House, the Senate should take up the issue immediately afterward. We could do it quickly so we don't interfere with anyone's travel plans to Arizona.

We would ask for limited debate and just two votes: the House status quo bill, which delays any sort of healthcare relief; and the Democratic alternative, which would lower healthcare costs for millions of Americans.

I urge Republican leaders to speed up these votes.

One of the oldest sayings in politics is from the great Abraham Lincoln. He said that “public sentiment is everything.” That is certainly true in this debate. The American people will look at what Republicans are doing and what Democrats are doing, and it will be clear that public sentiment is on our side.

Public sentiment will be on our side for at least three reasons:

First, the American people want both sides to work together. We have made

it clear we want a bipartisan negotiation, but Republicans don't. The American people detest seeing Republicans being so intransigent. Republicans are governing like their view is the only view. That is, of course, not true. We are a split country, half and half. And to cut one half out entirely—no talk, no negotiation—is unacceptable for the American people. That won't win public sentiment in any way.

The second reason public sentiment is on our side: Americans are tired of the failed, chaotic, high-cost status quo, which decimates their healthcare, which raises their costs, and which Republicans are defending in their bill.

Tens of millions of people are going to lose coverage. Starting in October, millions will receive notices that their healthcare insurance premiums are going to go up \$400, \$500, \$600—not a year; a month. The average working family can't afford that. Premiums are skyrocketing. Hospitals from Virginia to Nebraska, from Maine to California are shutting down now—not later. People won't be able to see a doctor or access affordable medication.

I met a woman whose daughter had cancer. She said to me that they depend on Medicaid for her recovery. What is she going to do? Wait? Delay? See what the Republicans want to do, if anything, when they haven't said they would do anything at all and they decimated healthcare themselves?

Now nursing homes are going to close down, and many, many American families are not going to know what to do about taking care of their elderly parents. They may not have room at home to have them move in, and even if they did, they can't give them the kind of healthcare their parents got in nursing homes. But nursing homes, one after the other, are going to close. They depend on Medicaid.

This is all chaos. This is suffering.

Medical research, which can cure cancer or Alzheimer's—millions are alive because we invested in medical research—cut it off? stifle it? don't send the money out for it? This is chaos. This is suffering.

These are the results of Donald Trump's policies, which the status quo, partisan Republican bill maintains, and Americans are tired of this status quo. All the data shows it. Even Leader THUNE called the Republican bill status quo—the status quo option—on the floor yesterday.

America, do you want the status quo on healthcare? Leader THUNE says his bill is status quo.

Today, I was amazed to hear that Leader THUNE called our bill filthy. Is it filthy to provide healthcare for sick Americans? Is it filthy to prevent premiums from going up \$400 or \$500 a month? Is it filthy to prevent rural hospitals from closing? That is why Republicans are so out of touch. That is why.

The American people desperately want change. They don't think our country is headed in the right direc-

tion, and they need help in bringing healthcare costs down, providing better healthcare. They need help maintaining coverage. They need help for the essentials. The Republican status quo bill doesn't do any of this, but the Democratic bill does—the second reason that public sentiment is on our side, not theirs.

Finally and just as importantly, it is unacceptable that Donald Trump has told Republicans not to negotiate with Democrats, and Donald Trump is heading America toward a shutdown by not negotiating.

Look. Here is what he said. These are Trump's words, not mine. I will remind everybody of his words last week: "Don't even bother" to deal with Democrats. When Donald Trump says "don't even bother" to deal with Democrats, he says he wants a shutdown, plain and simple. And again, that is the last thing the American people want—a President who says: My way or the highway, and shut the government down if I don't get my way. That is what he said.

The public is on our side. The public is on our side. Public sentiment is everything. They don't like Republican partisanship, they don't like the status quo bill, and they certainly don't like Donald Trump refusing to even have Democrats be part of the decision.

He says he doesn't need us? Well, Donald Trump either doesn't know how to count or doesn't understand a modicum of Senate procedure, which most Americans do.

You need 60 votes, Mr. President, Donald Trump. You have 53. You need our votes. To say not to bother with us is saying you want a shutdown, plain and simple. The American people see that.

Finally, Leader THUNE has spent a lot of time talking about the past. He has quoted me. I want to remind Leader THUNE—I want to remind my Republican colleagues—when Democrats were in the majority and I was majority leader, every year, we did not see a shutdown. I was majority leader for 4 years—no shutdowns. Why? Because we sat down with the other side and negotiated. We knew that the majority had to work with the minority. Like now, we knew then we had to get 60 votes. And bipartisanship ruled the day. It had to if you wanted to avoid a shutdown.

Why is that not happening now? Well, frankly, Leader JEFFRIES and I were befuddled for about a month because in late July, we asked THUNE and JOHNSON to sit down with us—late July. We heard nothing from them, crickets. We asked again in early September; nothing, crickets.

But now it has become clear why they wouldn't sit down with us. Here is the reason: Donald Trump. Donald Trump made it clear: "Don't even bother" dealing with the Democrats. THUNE and JOHNSON listen to Trump. They are not independent actors. They don't represent an independent Con-

gress, an independent House, or an independent Senate. And when Donald Trump says don't negotiate with Democrats, they don't and come up with 20 excuses why.

The single biggest reason that we are on the brink of a shutdown is Donald Trump's refusal to let Republicans even negotiate.

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

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

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, keeping the government open is a fundamental responsibility of elected officials. It always needs to be bipartisan, and today, that requires cooperation by the Democrats.

Right now, the Democrats are threatening once again to shut down the Government of the United States. We are trending toward another Schumer government shutdown. Democrats are in the minority in the Senate; they are in the minority in the House. Yet they have come up with what looks to me like a half-hearted bait-and-switch plan. It is a plan that is designed and is an attempt to deceive the American people. Democrats are trying to avoid being blamed for their reckless obstruction. The American people are not going to be deceived.

Let's be clear. The Schumer plan is a shutdown plan. It is far from a clean extension of current funding. In fact, it is a Trojan horse—a Trojan horse packed with reckless and radical liberal fantasies.

It is not serious, and the Democrats know it. The Democrats want a ransom payment—a ransom payment of over \$1 trillion to keep the government open for just 4 weeks.

So let's take a look at it. There is more than a trillion dollars in more spending in what the Democrats are proposing. At the same very time, they are proposing eliminating the \$50 billion rural hospital stabilization fund.

That is a lifeblood for rural hospitals in my communities and in your communities. The Schumer shutdown plan reads like a draft of the future platform for the 2028 Democrat National Convention. There are COVID bonus payments—this is in spite of the fact that the COVID crisis ended years ago. Liberal States are being rewarded for giving taxpayer-funded healthcare to illegal immigrants.

They want able-bodied, working-age individuals who refuse to work to continue getting Medicaid. Remember, these work requirements are overwhelmingly supported by hard-working Americans of all political persuasions.

They want to send taxpayer dollars overseas to pay for climate projects. This is fantasyland. They want taxpayer dollars to keep going towards \$40

million for low emissions development in West Africa. They want taxpayer dollars to keep going towards \$25 million for climate resilience in Honduras. They want the taxpayer dollars to keep going towards \$13.4 million for civic engagement in Zimbabwe.

The Democrats have a long and spirited history of wasting American taxpayer dollars. This plan is no different. The Schumer shutdown plan seems designed to score political points on the far, far left.

This is a clarifying moment for the American people. Democrats know they can't have any hope of passing this fantasy plan. They know it, and they know it because they want government to close.

Republicans are proposing a clean short-term extension of funding designed to keep the government opened and functioning. A clean short-term continuing resolution would easily pass the Senate in normal times. A clean CR keeps the government open. A clean CR gives appropriators from both parties the time to complete their work in regular order.

Let me point out that the Appropriations Committee is already producing bipartisan bills. Let me also point out that under Joe Biden, Democrats supported 13 short-term continuing resolutions to keep the government open, and 96 percent of them voted for them.

So times really are different under this Democrat leadership in their efforts to obstruct this President. Democrats once again are putting politics ahead of the essential work of governing. Senator SCHUMER is clearly making unreasonable demands knowing that his proposal can never pass the Senate. All Republicans are proposing is to continue to fund the government for the next 7 weeks. This is going to allow us to continue the appropriations process and keep the government open during that time.

Senator SCHUMER himself said last year that passing a clean CR "will avert a harmful and unnecessary shutdown." Now he wants to cause a harmful and unnecessary shutdown. At that time, he said passing a clean CR gives appropriators "time to finish drafting all 12 bills." Let me point out that those bills were then stuck in Senator SCHUMER's drawer, and he kept them there and never brought them to the floor of the U.S. Senate.

He even said, back then, if both sides work together, if we reject poison pills—of which his bill now is completely loaded with—if we reject poison pills, he said, that can never become law, then the task before us becomes much, much easier.

They want to shut down the government. That is what they are proposing. Senator SCHUMER needs to listen to his own advice from a year ago. But then he was majority leader; now they are in the minority. The proposal that he came out with last night is loaded with poison pills, and he knows it.

Let me repeat: 13 short-term continuing resolutions under President

Biden. SCHUMER was the majority leader at the time; 96 percent of Democrats voted for them.

Voting yes for a short-term continuing resolution was not considered controversial for the Democrats a year ago.

Now, I recognize that the minority leader today has a political problem. His radical base is demanding a government shutdown. They expect it, they insist on it, they command Senator SCHUMER to deliver that. His political problem may soon turn into a major problem for American families, for our soldiers, for our Border Patrol agents, for seniors living on a fixed income.

As Senators, our job is to keep the government open, and Senate Republicans are ready to keep the government open. Democrats can either join us or drag the Nation into another Schumer shutdown. That is their choice.

RENEWABLE FUEL STANDARD PROGRAM

Mr. President, the Renewable Fuel Standard Program is broken. It is a failed approach to ethanol. It has raised prices for consumers; it has threatened the jobs of American energy workers; and there is cause for concern about its harm to small engines.

The Senate is now debating whether to force even higher amounts of ethanol into our fuels. For the sake of American families, for the sake of American workers, we should reject this failed approach, not double down on it. It would only worsen the harm on the current system and lead to more market distortions.

We need to fix our broken system instead of favoring special interest groups and forcing consumers to pay higher prices.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, Paul Harvey was a radio commentator. He used to say "And now for the rest of the story."

I would like to respond to my friend from Wyoming's comments he just made on the floor of the Senate. One of the proposals Democrats stand by is to reestablish the tax credit for Americans who are buying their health insurance under the Affordable Care Act. It could be up to 15 million Americans stand to lose their health insurance coverage because of changes in the law on the big beautiful Trump budget bill. Among those who stand to feel hardship, at least, or maybe lose their insurance, are some 60,000 residents of the State of Wyoming.

Last night, Senators came to the floor to discuss this issue of the cost of health insurance, which is going to go up dramatically for many Americans as of the 1st of October. The example was given by Senator WELCH of Vermont of an individual making \$80,000 a year in the State of Wyoming, which he would see his ACA health insurance premiums go up \$3,000, \$3,000 a

month—\$3,000. I doubt that many of us could put that sum on the table without some sacrifice. Many people would end up giving up their health insurance entirely.

This was referred to as a liberal radical idea to protect that tax credit which was taken away by the Republicans in their big beautiful Trump budget bill. I don't think it is radical. If you have ever lived without health insurance and had a sick child in your family, you will never forget it. I have been through that experience. So this notion that this is a radical idea is wrong.

The Senator from Wyoming goes on to say that we are cutting out \$50 billion in a special program for hospitals across America. What he doesn't tell you is that that \$50 billion was a small lifesaver put in the Big Beautiful Bill because the Republicans voted to eliminate \$1 trillion in Medicaid spending, an essential program for small town and rural hospitals. So we restore—in addition to the ACA tax credit, we restored the \$1 trillion which was in the Medicaid Program, which will spare many of these hospitals from closing.

So when you look at the specifics of the situation when it comes to healthcare, this really makes a difference. I also want to tell you that the policy, healthcare policy that we currently see with this administration is frightening. Let me tell you a story.

When I was growing up as a little boy in East St. Louis, IL, we were afraid of polio. One of our classmates would go to school healthy in the morning and would be paralyzed before dinner. When I was in the first grade, my friend disappeared for weeks. When I asked where she went, they just shook their heads and said "Polio." When she finally returned, she couldn't walk without leg braces. I will never forget the agony I saw on her face.

For decades, polio ravaged America, killing and paralyzing thousands of people a year and then—and then—a vaccine was discovered. The Salk vaccine was a miracle. By 1979, polio was eradicated in the United States. A disease that struck fear in the heart of everyone soon became—thank God—a distant memory. We repeated that success early this century with diseases like measles and rubella.

Unfortunately, those vaccine victories are now under attack by the Health and Human Services Secretary Robert Kennedy, Jr. His actions threaten to reverse 50 years of progress in infectious disease treatment and prevention.

Let me tell you about the chaos that has occurred at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention since Secretary Kennedy was confirmed.

In February, Secretary Kennedy moved to fire—dismiss—more than 1,000 CDC staff members. That is 10 percent of the workforce. This included key members of the Agency's pandemic prevention and laboratory safety staff.