

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.

In August, he fired Dr. Susan Monarez from her position as Director of the CDC, despite the fact that she had been nominated by President Trump and confirmed by every Senate Republican just weeks before. Yesterday Dr. Monarez testified before the Senate HELP Committee about the circumstances surrounding her firing, and the revelations in her testimony were deeply, deeply troubling.

Dr. Monarez told the committee that Secretary Kennedy plans to upend our Nation's vaccine recommendation schedules this month. You see, the CDC's vaccine advisory committee meets regularly to make recommendations based on science on what vaccines Americans should receive at various points in their life.

States use these recommendations, professional medical recommendations, to develop guidelines for what vaccines our children should receive. Health insurance companies are required to cover the full cost of the recommended vaccines from this panel. Unfortunately, Secretary Kennedy unilaterally fired all of the members of the CDC Vaccine Advisory Committee, many of whom were infectious disease and vaccine experts. He fired them all. He replaced them with people who have espoused anti-vaccine views and aligned with extreme health-related conspiracy theories.

This new panel is set to meet today, and I fear they are about to upend decades of progress in preventing unnecessary illness by wiping out recommendations and access to childhood vaccines.

Dr. Monarez testified yesterday that she was fired from not preemptively agreeing to rubberstamp these new vaccine formulas absent scientific evidence that changes would warrant.

Think about that. Secretary Kennedy fired President Trump's pick to head the CDC because she insisted that the Agency's vaccine recommendations be actually backed by science.

Many States who see this anti-vaccine movement at the highest levels of our government are taking things to an even further extreme. Florida announced it would end most of its vaccine requirements, and other Republican States are likely to follow suit. The rising vaccine skepticism promoted by Secretary Kennedy and the Trump administration will cause a resurgence in preventable disease across America.

In Texas, two unvaccinated children died from measles earlier this year, the first such deaths in America in 10 years. Louisiana is experiencing its worse whooping cough outbreak in 35 years. More than 30 infants have been hospitalized, and many were not vaccinated with the DTaP vaccine that could have protected them. Tragically, two of these infants have already died.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., will be the first Secretary of HHS with a body count. He is a danger to the children of America. Kennedy's onslaught has tar-

geted more than just vaccines; he and President Trump have spearheaded a historic level of dysfunction at the National Institutes of Health. They have frozen medical research funding and fired scientists and researchers. Think about that. This is going to make America great again—firing medical researchers?

I have been a supporter of the NIH in all the time I have served in Congress. The research gives people hope when they are faced with devastating diagnoses.

For 10 years, I have been part of a bipartisan task force to raise the NIH research budget. In those 10 years, we increased the budget by more than 60 percent, raising it from \$30 billion to \$48 billion today. But Trump and Kennedy's proposed budgets for next year eliminates this \$18 billion increase in medical research. Every penny of the increase I fought for for the last 10 years is gone with this Trump budget. It will mean fewer novel cures and treatments for patients who need them. It will dramatically reduce research into Alzheimer's, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. They have been suspended because of the Trump-Kennedy cuts.

Does anybody believe that America is greater as a nation with less cancer research? I don't. Patients desperate for cures for horrible conditions like glioblastoma are in agony today because President Trump and Secretary Kennedy canceled the research funding they depend on.

Secretary Kennedy's cuts will stifle a generation of researchers and jeopardize our medical research infrastructure. We will feel the effects of this rash decision for decades to come.

I call on my Republican colleagues to stand up to this public health massacre. Some of the Members are doctors or parents themselves who have vaccinated their kids or spent their careers trying to improve our healthcare system.

My colleagues know that Secretary Kennedy is unqualified, unhinged, and dangerous, and I hope they will find the courage to join me and speak out against the terrible decisions he has fostered. If they don't, I fear there will be dire consequences if we allow Secretary Kennedy to continue to serve in a role where lives are on the line, and he is clearly unqualified.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). The Senator from Nebraska.

REMEMBERING CHARLIE KIRK

Mr. RICKETTS. Mr. President, 13 years ago, an inspired and patriotic 18-year-old by the name of Charlie Kirk launched a political organization. He wanted to identify, train, and organize students to engage in American politics. His dynamism, his tenacity, and his convictions helped inspire a generation.

Charlie Kirk was participating in the very American act of political dialogue when he was assassinated. He was a

husband, a son, a father—had two little children—and he was murdered in broad daylight. It is horrifying. It is very disheartening not only for me but I know many young people.

Tragically, it is all too common. Charlie Kirk isn't the only political figure to be impacted by violence. In recent years, he has just been added to the list of people like Congresswoman Gabby Giffords, Congressman STEVE SCALISE, Minnesota House speaker Melissa Hortman, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, and, of course, President Donald Trump.

No matter our political beliefs, all of us should be able to affirm a simple truth: that violence against political figures is unacceptable. It is actually anti-American, period. It is an attack upon our very values. It is an attack upon our Republic.

Our level of sympathy should not depend on the political views of the person who violence has been perpetrated against. Our level of outrage should not depend on the political views of the victim or the perpetrator.

In our great country, we settle disagreements with ballots, not bullets. The way to combat speech you don't like is with more speech, not less speech. This makes us better, sharper, and more American. That is what Charlie Kirk was doing when he was assassinated.

It might seem unnecessary to say these things in the wake of an assassination, but the tragic reality is that not every American believes what I just said; not everybody believes these statements are true. A recent YouGov poll found that only 72 percent of Americans said that political violence is always wrong, and 11 percent said that political violence can sometimes be justified. Eleven percent of people think that it is justifiable to commit political violence. That number shocks the conscience. Let that sink in. The people who believe that are siding with the bad guys.

We must reverse this trend. We must make sure that political violence isn't normal, that it is not accepted. Each of us has a role to play in that. Each of us can be a part of restoring American civic virtue.

We need to focus on what we know to be good and true. Let's spend more time in prayer. Let's spend more time outdoors rather than on our phones or our devices. Let's spend more time getting to know our neighbors and investing in our community. Let's relearn civil discourse. Civil discourse sharpens our arguments and makes us better, and it is better for our communities. It is what makes us human and what makes us American. The civil discourse in our great Republic is what makes us great.

There is no time to waste, and we all have a role.

God bless Charlie Kirk, his wife Erika, and their children. May Charlie rest in peace.