

saved. Their profound bravery and heroism can never be forgotten, as well as the courageous community members who acted quickly to shield women, children, and the elderly from gunfire.

Finally, I want to thank the numerous local, State, and Federal Agencies that have stepped in to support the victims and their loved ones and ensure a thorough investigation is carried out.

Michiganders are tough. Michiganders are resilient. But most importantly, they are kind. On Sunday, that kindness showed through as we saw so many people race—race—to help in the aftermath of this appalling attack. As we remember the victims and as we remember their loved ones and the community members who are still grieving, I hope those actions not only provide some form of comfort but also show that heroism and kindness in the face of unspeakable tragedy is truly who we are as Americans.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, first of all, I want to express my sadness at the loss of lives in Michigan, and I want to thank my colleagues Senator PETERS and Senator SLOTKIN.

You speak for every single one of us, and our hearts are broken. Regrettably, our hearts are broken too many times with this endless violence. But thank you so much. And you spoke for every single Member of the Senate, Republican and Democrat, and I think you spoke for America.

Thank you, my colleagues.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, we are on the verge of a shutdown, and the question is why. And there are a couple of reasons, because, in my view, we should never have a shutdown, and it is an indication of a breakdown in the constitutional process and the failure of the Executive and the legislative branch to do their job.

As with any kind of shutdown, the conversation focuses on who is to blame. I don't particularly want to talk about who is to blame because I know who will suffer. The people who will suffer are the people that the Presiding Officer represents in Nebraska; they are the people I represent in Vermont. But I do think it is important to give some history of how this happened and what is at stake, and I say that hoping that at the end of the day, which will be tomorrow, we do not have a shutdown, we do not turn the lights off on government.

We have had brinkmanship before, but before, we have had situations where, as we approach the midnight hour, the policy differences—that were vast—between Republicans and Democrats were being discussed by Democrats and Republicans, and that discussion was often at the behest and insistence of the Executive, playing a proper role to get us to talk and resolve those differences. This time, it is different. We have an Executive who said that his party should not even speak to Democrats—not even speak to Democrats.

So I will just ask the commonsense question a Vermonter would ask: Peter, if you disagree with somebody and you won't talk to them, how will you resolve the disagreement?

And that is what has happened.

The second thing is—and I want to say this to my Republican colleagues—we have an Executive who pays no respect to the role that the legislative branch of this government plays in the affairs of this country.

We passed a budget with Republican and Democratic support, and we have an Executive who said he didn't care what it is we passed; he was going to do what he wanted, under the aggressive, caustic leadership of Russell Vought, the head of the Office of Management and Budget. And what Republicans and Democrats in this body agreed to spend, the Executive refused to spend, froze the funding; whether it was foreign aid or healthcare, he could decide.

That is a total and complete violation of the constitutional separation of powers. To the extent that this body—Congress—puts its head in the sand and disregards the assault on our authority by the Executive, we have relinquished our authority. More importantly, we have relinquished our duty. We have relinquished our duty to the people we represent to stand up for the constitutional separation of powers and to bear the responsibility that we have to make decisions about taxing and spending.

There is another reason why we can't just kick the can down the road. There is, in this country, an affordability crisis. People can't afford homes, and they definitely cannot afford healthcare. Folks are terrified at the likelihood of a person they love in their family getting sick if they don't have insurance.

What is about to happen if we don't act before this shutdown is that folks who are getting their healthcare through the Affordable Care Act, who are paying a significant portion of their income for that healthcare but can only afford it because of the subsidies—not because they want to have subsidies but because the healthcare system is so expensive—ObamaCare, the Affordable Care Act. Those folks in the Presiding Officer's State and mine are going to lose their healthcare, and that is a reason we cannot condone a resolution that does not include protecting people's healthcare across this country, all those folks who are dependent on the Affordable Care Act for them to be able to have security that if their partner or if their child needs healthcare, they will have access to healthcare. That is the urgency of this. That is what makes it different.

We have an Executive who has told the Congress and the Republicans in Congress: Don't talk to the Democrats. Disgraceful.

More than that, we have a situation where the people all of us represent will lose their healthcare if we don't resolve that now—right now—because

they are starting to hear about the premium increases that will make it completely unaffordable for them to have access to healthcare.

When we get into a political situation, my Republican colleagues ask me: PETER, why would you want to have a shutdown?—which I don't want, by the way. But you know what, it is a fair question.

But there is a fair question I can ask of my Republican colleagues: Why do you want to have a resolution where the people we all represent are going to lose their healthcare? That is a fair question for us to ask you.

My belief is that there is no answer for that question because it is within our power right now—today, tonight—to make certain that folks who are on the Affordable Care Act will continue to have access to healthcare. It is up to us to solve that problem.

Let me just talk specifically about that and what it means to folks. If we don't act, in Florida, a 30-percent increase; Kentucky, a 32-percent increase; Louisiana, a 32-percent increase; Alabama, a 34-percent increase; West Virginia, a 35-percent increase; Texas, 39 percent; Tennessee, 41; South Carolina, 50.

We have wicked-high healthcare premiums in Vermont, and we may have the worst situation. Let me give an example. I know the Presiding Officer, as a former Governor, is totally sensitive to this. I know the Presiding Officer is.

A family where you have two folks working and they are making a little over \$100,000—they can get the ObamaCare healthcare for about \$7,500. Their premium is going to increase by \$2,300. That is not their fault. They have no control over that. They can't shop around. But what they know is they have a child, maybe a child with disabilities, and what they know is they love that child. They know they love their family. They know, as responsible adults, they want to make sure that if those kids or if their partner needs healthcare, they will have it.

If we fail to act, we are saying: You are on your own. It is complicated. It is political.

That is so unacceptable, and that is what we are talking about.

The blame game is: Why are you in favor of a shutdown?

I am not in favor of a shutdown.

I think the more profound question for each of us—Republican, Democrat, Independent—is, Is it within your power to continue healthcare for the Americans whom we represent? And the answer to that, we all know, is yes, it is within our power.

Now, we may have to stand up to an Executive who doesn't particularly care about that. But we do. We do. And if we do, we must act. So that is what is at stake here.

When we step back from the politics and the blame game and the shutdown showdown activities that are becoming ever more prominent here and just ask ourselves, as U.S. Senators, all of us

who represent people who are working-class, some are wealthy, some are disabled, all kinds of people, and we care about them. But can we really say we care about them if we let them lose their healthcare? My answer to that is no.

So I am ready to do whatever it takes to continue access to healthcare. And the people who want healthcare—it is about the love they have for the people in their lives; it is not about getting some political advantage with the outcome of this debate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, Donald Trump is powerful, but he is not all-powerful. It is true that he is trying to consolidate power in illegal and dangerous ways, but it is also true that he is often failing to do that because of public opinion, because of markets, because of institutions, and because of the law itself.

I want to give a couple of recent examples. Two weeks ago, shortly after Trump and FCC Commissioner Brendan Carr threatened to punish ABC if it didn't suspend Jimmy Kimmel's show, the network announced that it was taking the show off the air indefinitely. So at first, the public coercion seemed to work. Brendan Carr had said, point blank:

We can do this the easy way or [we can do this] the hard way.

And the network caved. But a swift and searing backlash quickly followed. Consumers revolted. People began canceling their subscriptions.

Disney's market cap fell by close to \$6.5 billion in a matter of days. Artists, advertisers, and employees spoke out. Even Republicans in the Senate denounced the move.

My Senate colleague TED CRUZ called it "dangerous as hell":

I think it is unbelievably dangerous for government to put itself in the position of saying we're going to decide what speech we like and what speech we don't, and we're going to threaten to take you off [the] air if we don't like what you're saying.

Criticizing your own party's administration is hard. I understand that. But this is not about whether you are left or right or whether you thought Jimmy Kimmel's comment was insensitive or not. It is about the basic question of "Are we allowed to speak freely in the country without fear that the government is going to come after us?" because, if not, that is not the America that any of us recognize.

Here is another example. Last week, Trump installed a loyalist with no experience as prosecutor as the interim U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, and within days, the office indicted former FBI Director James Comey on charges without much evidence at all.

And the case is so absurd that they couldn't even get a single career prosecutor to take it on. So, instead, the newly installed interim U.S. attorney

had to sign and present the indictment herself in a highly unusual move. One of the charges was rejected by the grand jury almost immediately.

Now, why does that matter? It is, without a doubt, a dark day for the country when the President of the United States uses the Justice Department to prosecute political opponents. But legal experts widely expect this case to fail before it even gets to trial. And that, too, will be a reminder that while this President is powerful, he is not all-powerful. This isn't a free-for-all. He doesn't get to just do whatever he wants.

That brings me to this debate about government funding. Democrats are out of power, but we are not powerless, and our price is not that high. We have been asking Republicans, for over a month, to sit down and negotiate. I have been here 13½ years. We have never passed an appropriations bill without negotiation.

But Trump literally told his party: "Don't even bother dealing with them." And so it took them until today, on the eve of a shutdown, for a meeting.

And the House is out of town. The House adjourned until after the funding deadline expires. They were going to come back on October 1, which is already 24 hours too late. Now they are thinking October 7.

If you are serious about a deal, if you are serious about keeping the government open, why are you not in the U.S. Capitol?

Russ Vought, in July, the OMB Director, said: You know, the appropriations process should be less bipartisan.

The person in charge of the Federal Government in the executive branch is pretty explicit. He says: The appropriations process should not involve Democrats at all.

The only way to keep the government open is for both parties to negotiate a bipartisan agreement. If the Republicans want to listen to Donald Trump and say, "Don't even bother dealing with the Democrats," then there is a very old adage and an iron law in politics, which is: If you don't ask for the vote, you do not get the vote.

We are ready to work together to keep this government open, and I want everybody to understand what we are fighting for—what we are fighting for. Tens of millions of Americans are getting letters in the mail, and they don't know they are on the Affordable Care Act exchange. What the hell is that anyway? They just sign up for healthcare on a website, right? You don't know if you are on Obamacare or some hybrid thing or employer or this or that. You just get a letter from your insurer, and they say: If you want to reenroll in your healthcare plan, here is how much it will be. It is usually like a small increase, year over year, to cover inflation.

So now they are going to get a letter that literally says: Your subsidies are

gone, and your new price is x. The average increase is going to be hundreds of dollars per person per month. Add to that that we are hearing in some States, and maybe as a result of some job owning with the administration, they are waiting to send those letters. They are waiting to send those letters. Why? Because they are hoping we are going to resolve this ACA tax credit thing, and they don't want to eat, politically speaking, the fact that a bunch of people, tens of millions of people—Democrats, Republicans, Independents, nonvoters, but zero noncitizens—zero noncitizens—you are not eligible to be on the exchange if you are a noncitizen—are going to get a letter saying: You know it is going to be \$3,000 or \$4,000 more per year.

Like, go talk to a regular person. Some of us know regular people who are on that exchange and know: I just can't do it—\$300 dollars more per month. And, by the way, if you get that letter in December and your first payment is due on January 1, you are extra screwed.

So I understand that the White House understands how big of a political liability this is because people are really going to get hurt. And now it is a question of sort of people wanting to not behave as though they are giving in.

But let's be adults here. There is a crisis that is about to happen to tens of millions of Americans, and we have an opportunity to fix it, and there is bipartisan desire to fix it. And Leader Thune and Speaker Johnson's view is: Nah, we will deal with that later. And Donald Trump was saying: Why don't we deal with that next year?

By next year, all of the rates are locked in, and people will be paying \$300 or \$400 or \$500 more per person per month.

We can fix this, and we should.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor today because we have a choice here, and the Democratic leaders in both the Senate and the House just went to the White House. They had a long meeting. I am glad that meeting happened. I hope something will come out of it.

But the President has repeatedly said: Well, we don't need Democratic votes. Well, we can do this on our own.

The problem is the more he says that, the more the American people are saying: What about me?

"What about me?" says the farmer whose soybean market is dried up, whom I met with last week. "What about me?" says the mom coming out of the grocery store and looking at her bill or the student thinking "I can't afford this electricity bill" or everyone that is starting to look at these healthcare numbers, looking at the insurance premiums, looking at the fact that this administration has not stood up for them on healthcare?

So if they would open their eyes right now and see what is going on out

there or maybe go to those 13 rural counties that I just visited in Minnesota, maybe they would see that this is a moment where people are expecting the President and congressional Republicans to work with us on these unfolding crises.

The tariffs may be decided in the courts or the Congress can decide enough is enough, but this healthcare crisis—that is on this body to do something right now. The President has sadly made his position clear. He would rather shut down the government than work with congressional Democrats to address this skyrocketing healthcare cost crisis.

So our colleagues, many of whom I work with every day, they can decide: Are they going to rubberstamp what he does or are they going try to work with us?

So one of the things that one of the farmers said to me last week, at one of my meetings, is this: Between my entire market drying up—in Minnesota, 60 percent of our soybeans are exported to other countries; of course, China hasn't purchased a bushel since this President came in—and the cost of fertilizer going up because of the tariffs on potash out of Canada—and even then, though they were reduced, it is still a major driver—between the issues with visas and not having enough workers—he described it, as he looked at the healthcare policy and what is happening there, since about 28 percent of our farmers are on the Affordable Care Act because they are individual businessowners—he said it is the perfect storm of ugly.

I think that is a good way to describe it. So what do you do when there is a storm—a perfect storm of ugly—coming at you? Do you go out there with an umbrella and say, well, maybe we can look at this in a month or two?

You don't have that luxury. The American people don't have that luxury. This is not a December thing. This is not a January thing. This is a now thing.

So I hope our colleagues will see it as the opportunity that it is, and that is to finally do something to help the people that are facing this.

NBC recently reported on one family that currently pays \$278 a month for health insurance, thanks to the healthcare tax credit. If Republicans in Congress and the President let this expire, this family's premiums could soar to \$1,800 a month, an increase of \$1,500 a month.

The estimate is that nationally it will be a 75-percent increase in premiums. In rural, it will be double. I was actually surprised at our rural hospitals—of course, they are concerned about the Medicaid cuts—that the \$500 billion in Medicare cuts that is coming at them, because of the fact that the debt was increased so much in that bill with the tax cuts for the wealthy that it triggered an automatic \$500 billion of Medicare costs.

All of that is worrisome, but maybe I just hadn't thought it through. The Af-

fordable Care Act premium increases, without any tax credits, really concern them. Why? Because so many of their people that are going into their hospitals in rural areas are either on Medicaid or they are on what we call in Minnesota MNSure, their policy through the Affordable Care Act.

Those people won't be able to afford double—no way—because they are already in that perfect storm of ugly. So then they aren't going to have insurance, and they are going to show up in their emergency rooms, in these midsize towns, with no insurance. So they said this could make a major, major difference for them.

Our legislation would have kept the lights on. Our bill, it got more votes than the Republican bill. I would like to point that out. A whole bunch of people didn't even show up for the vote that we just had a week ago, and our proposal that did something about healthcare—to restore people's healthcare—actually got more votes than the Republican proposal.

So we want people to work with us and prevent millions of Americans from losing their healthcare. This is our opportunity to show why we came here to begin with, and that is to stand up for our constituents.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, for the past 6 or so months, I have been crisscrossing the State of Wisconsin, listening to families, small business owners, parents, caregivers, doctors, nurses, and neighbors about what good, affordable healthcare means to them. And the overwhelming consensus, as you might expect, was that having healthcare you can rely on and afford means everything.

I know this exact feeling. When I was just 9 years old, I had a very serious childhood illness, similar to spinal meningitis. That wasn't the exact diagnosis. But I was in the hospital for 3 months, and even though I was able to make a full recovery, my family was then not able to find any health insurance to cover me, not at any price, because I had been labeled as a child with a preexisting health condition.

You see, back then, insurance companies were under no obligation to cover people who had been sick or were sick. So people with preexisting health conditions, like diabetes or a cancer diagnosis, so often went uninsured. That kind of experience, being hospitalized for months and then not being able to get health insurance, it is not an experience that one forgets.

So when we have these debates about healthcare policy, I know that it is not just a high-minded conceptual idea. It is real. The consequences are real, and the people behind the stories are real.

And over the past few months, I have been able to hear those real stories. I heard stories from families who were sometimes unable to put into words what it would mean if their Medicaid were stripped away.

I heard from Evan in Madison, WI. Evan is on Medicaid. We call it Badger Care in the State of Wisconsin. Evan has undergone two brain surgeries and subsequent radiation over the past 10 years to treat brain tumors. Thankfully, he has Medicaid to help cover this care, but his ability to stay healthy means that he needs medication. He wrote to me and said that without Medicaid, "I won't be able to afford my medication that literally gives me the ability to go out and be a part of my community."

I also heard from Ashley from De Pere, WI. She told me how Medicaid was essential for her 15-year-old daughter with disabilities. Medicaid has allowed her to modify her home so her daughter can safely get around and also allowed the family to get a wheelchair-accessible van so her daughter can get to school and get to the doctor and just be a kid and experience the world.

These are the Americans who are now living in fear that their Medicaid is on track to be terminated because my Republican colleagues jammed through a partisan bill that cuts Medicaid to the bone and will kick more than 10 million Americans off their healthcare. As always, I would be remiss if I did not say that was all in service to giving huge tax breaks to big, profitable corporations and the ultrawealthy.

This is the damage that I am hearing about from the people I work for, and, sadly, the stories from folks who are worried their healthcare is on the line don't end there. Twenty-four million Americans get their healthcare from the Affordable Care Act, and they are waiting right now for that dreaded letter in the mail letting them know that their premium costs are about to skyrocket. For the 22 million who receive enhanced premium tax credits, their costs will go up on average by 75 percent. Four million of these Americans are going to get that letter and realize that they cannot afford healthcare at all anymore.

This, of course, is because my Republican colleagues refuse to pass our bill to extend the enhanced premium tax credits and make them permanent, which allow millions of Americans to get affordable healthcare through the ACA.

I heard from some of those families and small business owners last week. They are just dreading what they are about to find out and what the future holds for them.

Take Kim, who owns a bakery in the Fox Valley. Last week, she laid out how if Republicans refuse to extend these tax breaks, she is not only worried about how she will be able to afford her healthcare but also that increased costs on the exchange will mean that employees may quit working for her to go work for a big company that offers insurance. And, of course, she is worried that her customers will inevitably be left with less

in their pockets to come by and patronize her store.

I also heard from Keith in Marathon County, who runs his own insurance business. He knows this issue inside out, and Keith laid out some staggering figures for me of what he is staring down. If Republicans don't join me in extending these premium tax credits and making them permanent, Keith's premiums will go from less than \$740 per month to more than \$2,300 per month just to get insurance for his family. That is a staggering increase.

It is no exaggeration to say that the American people are staring down a healthcare crisis. We have a healthcare system in crisis. And I want to be clear that it is 100 percent manufactured by my Republican colleagues.

But do you know what? This is still avoidable. It is still avoidable. I am hearing my constituents sounding the alarm, so I am here to do the same. I got the memo that they don't want to have Medicaid gutted, they don't want to have their Affordable Care Act tax credits taken away, and they don't want their costs to skyrocket.

The people I work for have been crystal clear about what they expect and demand of Congress: Work together to lower costs and give them the opportunity for their hard work to let them save and to let them get ahead.

So that is my position. We need to lower the costs of healthcare, not take it away from families. I simply refuse to just go along to get along because the people I represent are truly struggling, and the solution is right in front of us.

That brings us to today. The path to keep the government open and stop healthcare costs from rising for millions is on the table. The whole idea of a shutdown is totally avoidable. If Republicans refuse to see what is right in front of them, then a shutdown is on them. And Wisconsinites will know exactly who to thank when they get that dreaded letter and their healthcare costs skyrocket or they see it simply stripped away.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, the House of Representatives is not coming back into session, reportedly, until next week. The government is shutting down tomorrow night, and the Republican House of Representatives isn't here, and they aren't coming back until the government has been shut down—reportedly for days. That tells you all you need to know about who is responsible for a potential shutdown of the government. Republicans care so little about funding the government that they aren't even showing up.

President Trump doesn't care either. He boycotted even meeting with Democrats until 24 hours before the shutdown was to begin. He was watching golf or posting on social media—basically anything except trying to negotiate, to do the job of government.

I wish Republicans were trying to keep the government open instead of trying to shut it down, but what I really want is for Republicans to open their eyes and see what is happening at an increasing pace to our democracy.

What I want and what I think is necessary at this moment is for any budget that we write to put the health of our democracy first. In fact, as I have watched the events of the past few weeks play out, with political enemies being systematically hunted by this administration, I think that we all have a moral obligation to only support a budget that at the very least puts the brakes on the President's lawlessness.

Right now, our democracy is in grave peril, and there is no better example of this than the events that played out last week over the indictment of former FBI Director James Comey.

The President has made it clear that he wants to put his political enemies in jail as retribution for the charges brought against him. He does not care about whether there are grounds for these charges; he just wants charges. So he instructed Erik Siebert, the U.S. attorney in Virginia, a Republican, to bring charges against James Comey, but Siebert refused for a simple reason: There was no evidence that James Comey had done anything illegal. So Trump fired Siebert, and he appointed his personal lawyer, who has never set foot in a courtroom, as the new U.S. attorney simply because he knew she would follow orders.

Every career prosecutor in the office recommended she refuse to bring the charges—again, because there were no charges to be brought—but she did it anyway, as instructed. Not a single other lawyer in the office would sign the indictment—virtually unprecedented in a case like this.

Trump cheered the indictment, and then he warned that there would be more charges brought against others that had vocally opposed his policies.

That is not all that happened in the last 2 weeks. Trump ordered the FCC to issue threats to TV stations that did not remove one of his primary late night critics, Jimmy Kimmel, from the airwaves. He announced new military deployments to additional cities. He began a process to harass and arrest leaders of prominent political groups that oppose his Presidency, threatening at least one funder of groups that oppose his policies, George Soros, with arrest simply for supporting opposition to Trump.

Much of this, though not all of it, has happened in the wake of the brutal, horrific murder of conservative activist Charlie Kirk. His assassination was abhorrent, and it was and still is a moment for all of us to consider what we can do to stamp out political violence and violence of all kinds. But his murder does not justify the dizzying campaign of political repression that has been carried out—often in his name—since. To exploit his murder to crush

dissent or to censor speech is unacceptable.

This brings me back to the debate over the expiring budget. I join with my colleagues in wanting this new budget to at the very least postpone the healthcare insurance increases that are coming for millions of Americans and that are going to ruin people's lives in this country—75 percent increases for people, who are going to make this awful decision about whether they should continue to pay their premiums, whether they should put food on their table for their kids, or whether they should risk going without insurance.

I think that is a pretty reasonable ask. Just don't increase costs on families when it comes to healthcare at a time when the cost of everything else is going up because of President Trump's insane economic policies.

But let me ask you this as well: Why would we not also simply say that any budget we pass should stop the worst of the lawlessness? Stop the deployments to our cities. Stop the witch hunt of Comey and Soros and Senator SCHIFF. Stop using the FCC to censor speech. Stop unconstitutionally ignoring the budget and spending only money that the President wants to spend.

To me, this is simple: We should not willingly pay the bills for the most serious assault on political freedom since the Civil War—an assault that may collapse American democracy as we know it.

Now, I know my Republican friends think this is hyperbole, that our fear for our democracy is just fearmongering, just politics. I swear it is not.

Our Republican colleagues know why Comey and Senator SCHIFF and Soros are being targeted. They know that the President just picked the people that give him the hardest time and told his folks to come up with charges.

My Republican colleagues know the impact that this has on people who want to politically and peacefully oppose the President but now won't do that because they fear for their freedom. Republicans know this. They should not defend it.

Republicans know that it is wrong to sit down and agree to a budget and then cheer the President when he refuses to spend the money in blue States or on the priorities that got Democrats to sit down at the table to begin with. Republicans know that is not fair play. They shouldn't defend it.

Republicans know that using the FCC to crack down on speech that the President doesn't agree with is wrong. They know, as Senator CRUZ pointed out, that is a slippery slope we may never get off.

I want to find agreement with the Republicans on stopping these premiums from going up. I do. I think that is really important for people in this country. And I think it is OK to admit that this is an odd arrangement that we have in American Government

today, where the minority party in the Senate, so long as it has 40 Members, is kind of in a coalition government with the majority party because the budget can't pass without bipartisan agreement. But the majority party has an obligation to honor and fight for a basic set of protections for our democracy, and when it doesn't, it really stops being a good-faith negotiating partner.

How do Republicans expect us to vote for a budget that funds a government that is lawlessly pursuing Democrats, that is arresting and harassing our members and our allies, that is deploying the Army and masked officers to our cities?

We are at a moment of decision for this country. Right now, Republicans aren't even trying to keep the government open. They are not even here.

They are not even here. They are rooting for a shutdown.

But if we are going to keep the government open, why can't we all agree that it should only be a government that respects our democracy, that is not corrupt, that doesn't treat people and places that oppose President Trump as enemies deserving of indictment or military deployment. That also seems like a pretty minimalist ask.

So it is decision time: Is this Senate going to fund the destruction of our democracy or are we going to do what is necessary to stand up for basic American values?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am honored to follow my colleague from Connecticut and to build on some of the arguments that he has made so well. We are here because our democracy is in crisis. It is not some potential catastrophe on the horizon that is distant or hypothetical. It is real. It is now because of the lawlessness and recklessness of this administration.

And it is the result of a contempt for the law, for legal norms that, seemingly, is boundless. We have seen it in the Jimmy Kimmel episode where the FCC Chair said, in mobster-like language: They can do it the hard way or the easy way.

"You have a nice restaurant there. It would be a shame if anything happened to it." I prosecuted mob cases. That is the kind of language we see from organized crime.

And it was shown in the indictment of James Comey, a document signed only by the U.S. attorney, not by any career official, and after only 14 members of the 23 people on that Grand Jury voted to do it on two of the counts, rejecting a third.

All of this kind of procedure is so highly extraordinary. As a former prosecutor, it would be an embarrassment. But this administration is beyond shame when it comes to lawlessness.

And we have seen it in immigration, in healthcare, in education, in the VA,

where countless people have been illegally fired, some of them hired back.

And that is why we are insisting that there be a guarantee that the President will follow the law when we pass a budget. It is not a hypothetical danger that he will disobey it. In fact, he has ordered rescissions, impoundments, clawbacks. If we pass a law, we have to be sure the President will follow it. Otherwise, there really isn't any point to this branch of government.

And so I say to my Republican colleagues, as a matter of your self-respect, as a matter of protecting this institution, you should agree with us that there must be a guarantee that the rule of law will prevail.

And I say to my constituents in Connecticut: We are going to stand up for you to save your healthcare because you can't wait to get sick. You don't choose to get sick on November 22 or January 3 when it is convenient for Donald Trump and the Republican majority.

You need to know, when there is open enrollment on November 1, whether or not your insurance will be affordable for you. You need to know whether those subsidies will make it affordable for you because otherwise you won't be able to buy insurance through the ACA. In fact, 90 percent of all people in Connecticut who buy insurance through the ACA marketplace receive some kind of subsidy, and their insurance premiums will skyrocket by 75 percent if that subsidy is ended. They need to know now, when open enrollment starts, whether those subsidies will be there for them.

And it will affect insurance premiums for everyone if we fail to extend those subsidies as part of this continuing resolution now. Why? Because healthier people who see their insurance premiums rise by 20 percent—right now, they are projected to rise at least 18 percent for everyone because that is the cost of this failure to extend the subsidies. The healthier people are going to say: I am not bothering. I won't need it.

The sicker people may try to buy it, and the insurance companies will have to cover illnesses, more of them, with fewer premiums, and they will have to charge more to everyone to cover it.

So this failure to do the right thing has impacts for everyone who seeks healthcare and tries to buy insurance to pay for it.

The Republican proposal is an abject failure when it comes to ensuring that the American people don't pay more for healthcare. And I heard from constituents just over this past weekend as I went to the Durham Fair, as I went to the mum parade in Bristol, as I went to Norwalk and Stamford and Milford, all around the State, people asking me: What will happen to my health insurance? What will happen to my healthcare?

Nothing is more important than health, and we are saving healthcare for the American people by insisting

that this extension of government funding include a reversal of the cruel and stupid "Big Blatant Betrayal"—it is not a Big Beautiful Bill, the "Big Blatant Betrayal" that failed to extend those healthcare subsidies—and insist that whatever bill that is passed be obeyed by the President.

The ACA premium tax credits have protected millions of Americans from those higher healthcare costs, and they have reduced the numbers of Americans without health insurance coverage. They have provided robust choices for consumers and provided stability for healthcare providers, especially in rural areas.

And I have heard from those providers who are as worried as their patients about what will happen to this program.

What the Republicans are doing is cruel. It is unnecessary. There is a straightforward, simple solution. It should not be a partisan issue. Republicans know we have to extend those subsidies. Why not now? That is the mystery to the American people.

And there will be no credit for a shutdown. The American people know that we are not seeking it. We hope to avoid it. It will be on Republicans who have refused to come to the table. House Republicans have refused even to come to town, come back to go into session, and they are having discussions, reportedly, about whether they can have fundraisers during the shutdown if there is one.

So we need some wiser heads and stronger conscience to prevail, and I am hopeful there is still time to reach that kind of agreement.

I choose to stand with working families, and I urge my Republicans to do the same.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, millions of Americans better check their mailbox over the next week or two. There is some bad news. Letters are being sent by health insurance companies that are trying to give some kind of a warning to these families about what is going to happen to their health insurance premiums because of the big beautiful Trump budget bill.

One family in Illinois tells the story, Leighanne Safford and her husband Lorry. Right now, Leighanne and Lorry pay \$278 a month for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act. But starting January 1, their monthly premiums—now get this—jump from \$278 a month to \$1,800 a month, a 550-percent increase—\$1,500 more coming out of the paychecks of Lorry and Leighanne.

Why is this happening? Because we have a system, or had a system, that provided subsidies and tax credits to working families so that they could afford their health insurance. However, in the big beautiful budget bill of Donald Trump—passed with every Republican voting for it, every Democrat voting against it—these subsidies and credits started to disappear.

Thanks to President Biden and a Democratic Congress, those credits were there for families that they could count on. Because of the Republican decision with President Trump to give tax breaks to the wealthiest people in America, they cut back on the premium assistance that was available to the Safford family.

These credits had opened the door to millions of working and middle-class Americans like Leighanne and Lorry to be able to afford quality health insurance.

Now they have got to make a choice. This is a lot of money—\$1,500 a month. Millions of Americans will decide: Are we going to cut back on essentials like food and dental or switch to a higher deductible plan, more money out-of-pocket if anybody gets sick? Leighanne said:

Right now, we're making a decision based on . . . being relatively healthy. But, as we all know, with health, it can change any day.

That is the same bind that millions of Americans are going to face because of the Republican decision to give a tax break to the wealthiest people in America.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, more than 4 million American families are going to lose their health insurance if Congressional Republicans allow these subsidies to expire, and that is what is going to happen if we don't change, including more than 100,000 in my State of Illinois.

It doesn't have to be this way. We can extend these tax credits and still fund government.

I remember a time in this Chamber when Democrats and Republicans came together on a bipartisan basis when real family challenges existed and tried to solve the problem. We just don't have that spirit here anymore. They have decided on the Republican side, we are going to give tax breaks to these wealthy people, even at the expense of working families.

And we have a President hell-bent on abusing his power and a Republican Congress that refuses to disagree with him.

Earlier this year, President Trump and Republicans in Congress signed into law this Big Beautiful Bill. It cuts nearly a trillion dollars from programs like Medicaid. What is Medicaid important for? Limited-income families and retired individuals.

This big beautiful Republican budget bill cuts nearly a trillion dollars from Medicaid and \$300 billion from the Food Stamp Program, now known as SNAP.

As a result of their bill, the Republican bill, more than 10 million Americans will lose their health coverage.

Ever had a child who was sick and no health insurance? I have. You will never forget it as long as you live.

This is separate from 4 million others who stand to lose their health coverage if the Republicans continue to block our efforts with the ACA tax credits. It seems Republicans in Congress are fine

adding more than 3 trillion to the national debt over the next 10 years to pay for those tax cuts, but they draw the line at extending healthcare to millions of hard-working Americans.

The math is clear. Republicans don't have the votes to force this extreme agenda. Government requires input from both sides. We are taking a stand for this family and millions more just like them. When they get the jolt of the news of where their health insurance premium is going to go, where do they turn? I hope they can turn to Congress and Members of the Senate who actually care for working families. If we refuse to do the job, Leighanne and Lorry are going to pay the price.

Let's be clear, Democrats stand ready to negotiate on a fair bipartisan basis. The only reason we are staring at this shutdown is because Republicans have refused to come to the table.

There was a meeting at the White House today. Don't let it be the last one. Let's come together and fix this healthcare problem for working families.

The President on FOX News said last week: Don't even bother dealing with the Democrats.

Well, the President is wrong. We are in this together. We need to solve this problem together. If the government shuts down, it will be because of President Trump walking away from a major challenge facing working families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, one of the things I have had the most trouble understanding in the time that I have been in the Senate has been Republicans' bizarre fascination with attacking healthcare systems, with taking healthcare coverage away from Americans. It came to a boil in the "Beautiful for Billionaires" bill—which cut about a trillion dollars out of Medicaid—and, in a hidden fashion through sequester, cut about half a trillion dollars out of Medicare and then attacks the Affordable Care Act, which so many Americans rely on to be able to afford their health insurance.

I represent Rhode Island. Rhode Island is probably going to lose up to \$5 billion in Federal Medicaid funding. The Medicare cuts would be probably about half of that. And the Affordable Care Act is going to hit about 40,000 Rhode Islanders who will see their insurance premiums explode. And that is going to happen soon.

This is a healthcare crisis that Republicans have created, and we would like to try to protect the American public in all of this. These are not going to be small increases in people's bills. We are talking about an 85-percent increase in already expensive health insurance premiums, as much as \$1,200 a year for a middle-class family.

Let me give you just an example of what this looks like in real life. I have

a constituent named Carla. Carla is 60 years old. She is retired. She was a mental health counselor, which is noble work but doesn't make you rich. She gets \$60,000 in annual income, mostly from her 401(k). She doesn't yet qualify for Medicare, so she got insurance from the Rhode Island State health insurance marketplace.

She has a family history of heart disease. She has hypertension. When the tax credits under the Affordable Care Act expire at the end of the year, Carla's monthly premium will go from \$427 a month to \$904 a month. That is more than double. That is a \$477 per month increase to the expenses of a woman whose total income is only \$60,000 a year.

We ought to be able to solve this. All we are asking for is serious negotiations to address the Republican healthcare crisis or, I guess, if they refuse, the Republican government shutdown. It is very much up to Republicans where we go from here. All the reports are that the meeting between the President and congressional leaders went badly; no progress was made at all.

It is really up to the Republicans. Will they really choose to shut down the U.S. Government just to indulge their bizarre fascination with taking healthcare away from Americans? Aren't we better than that?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. KELLY. Mr. President, we are just a day away from a government shutdown because President Trump and Republicans would rather shut down the government than work with us to keep healthcare premiums from spiking for American families. We are watching the same pattern repeat itself again in Washington: partisan politics and dysfunction hurting hard-working families.

This fight is about healthcare. It is about what happens to families in Arizona if tax credits that reduce their healthcare premiums expire. It is about costs going up for people who are already feeling squeezed by inflation and Trump's tariffs driving up the prices of everything from groceries to back-to-school supplies.

And it is not complicated. If these tax credits expire, working families in my State will see their monthly premiums spike when they go to sign up for a new plan in just a few weeks. I have heard from Arizonans who are now saving hundreds of dollars every month because of these credits. Ending them would be a gut punch. For some, it would mean losing their coverage altogether.

It is pretty simple. We should extend them, and that is what we are proposing. Let's not forget who holds the cards: Donald Trump and my Republican colleagues. They are the ones saying no—not just to Democrats, not just to us, but to families in Arizona and across the country.

But instead of working with us to lower costs and avoid a shutdown, Donald Trump has refused to even sit down and talk about it for weeks until just today, barely 24 hours before the deadline. He would rather watch the country inch closer to a shutdown than to try to figure out solutions.

It is going to be everyday Americans who pay the price, your constituents and mine. In Arizona, more than 379,000 people have reduced premiums through these tax credits. It lowers their premium by an average of about \$475 every single month. So if those tax credits are allowed to expire, that means their healthcare premiums for next year go up as much as 55 percent. That is hundreds of dollars every single month.

And that blows a huge hole in the family budget. It means canceled family trips. It means not being able to sign your kid up to a sports league. It means taking on more shifts just to cover this added cost. And for a lot of folks, what this means is they will not be able to afford health insurance at all.

The estimate is that more than 109,000 people in Arizona alone would be unable to afford coverage. In the richest country in the history of the world, there is no reason why somebody who is working full time shouldn't be able to afford basic health insurance. No one should be one accident or one unexpected illness away from financial ruin. No one should be unable to take their kid to a doctor when they get sick.

But here we are because of Donald Trump and Republicans. This would hurt even harder in rural Arizona and small towns—places like Cochise, Apache, Navajo, and Santa Cruz Counties where there are fewer large employers who offer health benefits. But these are counties with higher poverty rates. It will hurt families across Arizona who finally—finally—got access to care and now they are being told that it may disappear.

It doesn't have to be this way. There is still time to extend the premium tax credits and protect families from higher costs while keeping the Federal Government open and serving Americans.

Mr. President, we can do this. We just have to be willing to sit down and work to figure it out. I know I am.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. We are behind schedule, so I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 25 minutes before taking the vote.

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

ELIMINATE SHUTDOWNS ACT

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I will ask you, I ask anybody in the Chamber, anybody who will listen to me on C-SPAN: Aren't you getting sick and tired of these government shutdown showdowns—with the drama, the turmoil, partisan bickering, the holding American people and our economy hos-

tage for demands for billions and billions of dollars and more spending that we can't afford?

I know I am. This madness doesn't have to continue. We can begin ending this madness tonight by voting on a very simple piece of legislation: Eliminate Shutdowns Act.

Again, it is very simple. All it does is say, if we don't pass appropriations bills for all of government or any department, we don't shut those departments down. We don't shut all of government down. We do, literally, what the State of Wisconsin has done since the 1950s: We keep spending at last year's levels. I mean, how more common sense can you get?

We accomplish that by enacting 2-week rolling continuing appropriations to fund all of government or any part of it that doesn't have an appropriation passed for it on a rolling basis. I ask the Chamber: Who could be opposed to something so simple that, again, it prevents all this turmoil, all this drama, all this partisan bickering?

Well, my guess is Democrats will oppose it. My guess is also some of our appropriators will oppose it. I have heard some of the rationale. I don't think it really holds water. But what one point made is the problem with continuing resolutions is they fund programs that should be reduced or canceled and prevent important new programs from being started.

Well, again, that will create the incentive—I agree with that, by the way; I don't like CRs either—that will create the incentive, under these automatic rolling 14-day continuing appropriations, to pass appropriations bills. It doesn't in any way, shape, or form diminish or detract from the authority of appropriators or the Appropriations Committee.

I also heard the appropriators want the pressure of government shutdowns to allow them to pass appropriation bills. I guess I somewhat understand their point. But I would like to point out that pressure certainly hasn't worked.

I got here in the year 2011. I don't think anybody can dispute the fact that at least since that point in time—and probably before that—the appropriations process is broken. It is dysfunctional.

In 15 years, what we should have done in Congress is pass 180 appropriations bills during those 15 years: 12 a year times 15—180 bills. Do you know how many we actually have passed? Six—six bills—one for fiscal year 2017, five for fiscal year 2019—six bills. That is a 3.3-percent success rate or, stated a better way, that is a 96.7-percent failure rate of the appropriations process.

During that 15 years, we have had three shutdowns, and we have passed 55 continuing resolutions—55. And people are going to oppose an automatic rolling continuing appropriation? By the way, this year, the continuing resolution that we did pass took us 6 months. It took us 6 months of dysfunction be-

fore we finally passed the appropriations for this year, which, of course, is going to end in a day and a half.

What the shutdown pressure did produce is the pressure to mortgage our children's future for it. It produced the pressure to pass multiple, thousand-page omnibus spending bills. We have increased or suspended the debt ceiling 12 times in those 15 years, since I have been here. Our debt has gone from \$14 trillion to over \$37 trillion. Clearly, this is a broken process. Spending is completely out of control.

I don't think it is going to surprise anybody to find out that I brought a couple of charts to basically make my point. I would like to talk about a few facts, a few figures. This Chamber is generally not really interested in talking about, like, figures, but with my accounting background, I would like to. So let me give you a little history lesson. This dates back—these are 4-year average deficits going back to the year 2001.

You will see, in the two terms of President Bush's administrations, average deficits were \$200 billion and \$300 billion. So the average over his 8 years is \$250 billion worth of deficits. Again, those were unacceptably high back then. That is when \$100 billion or 2, actually, was real money. People were concerned about it.

President Obama came into office with the great recession. As his adviser Rahm Emanuel said, "Never let a good crisis go to waste." And he didn't. So, in his first term, President Obama's average deficit was \$1.27 trillion. That sparked the Tea Party movement. I am part of that. When the Tea Party came, we actually made a difference. We did dig our heels in on that out-of-control deficit spending. So for President Obama's second term, deficits averaged \$550 billion. Again, \$550 billion—that is a lot of money, except in Washington, DC.

President Trump came into office with a divided government, and he had to do deals to get spending bills passed. So his deficit increased to \$810 billion for the first 3 years. Then COVID hit. We went on a massive, bipartisan, "uniparty" spending spree: a \$3.1 trillion a year deficit—\$3.1 trillion. We went from \$4.4 trillion in spending to 6.5 and never looked back.

Now, responsible leaders would have recognized that that was an aberration. We can't keep spending once the pandemic has passed.

You know, back in World War II, we had responsibilities. We started World War II by spending 11.7 percent of GDP. During World War II, that increased to 41 percent for the war effort, but responsible leadership brought that spending back down to 11.4 percent of GDP, after the war, in 1948.

That is not what the Biden administration did. They kept spending at pandemic levels. We averaged, during the Biden administration, deficits of \$1.9 trillion, and we will have a deficit this year of about \$2 trillion.