

has to do with overregulation, problems with gaining the appropriate permits, and the litigation environment, which means that any sort of critical infrastructure is probably going to be delayed years, maybe decades, from endless lawsuits.

That is a larger, more threatening situation, and I am only talking about a small part of it here today.

The steps we have taken so far are unfortunately too little, too late, in my view, but they are at least a step in the right direction. They are not enough, by themselves, to ensure that we have safe and secure supply chains for both mining and processing of critical minerals to meet our Nation's needs.

Once again, Deng Xiaoping, who said, "Hide your motives and bide your time," has successfully snookered the United States and our other allies around the world so that we are now almost entirely dependent on Chinese processing of critical minerals.

So there is not a day to wait. We need to make sure that we catch up and we catch up quickly. It is going to take a lot of work for the United States to claw our way back to where we need to be, but I am confident that we can, if we rise to meet the occasion.

So I would urge all of my colleagues to listen to and respond to this alarm bell that I am trying to ring here on the Senate floor today and take seriously the urgency of securing our supply chains and securing American processing facilities for critical minerals.

We simply do not have a choice. Otherwise, we will continue to be held hostage by an adversary that does not wish us well. They don't want friendly competition. They want dominance, and they also want to take Taiwan in the coming years.

If we can't build things because we can't deter them by building the weapons necessary to do that, if we can't sustain our economy by continuing to manufacture technology that allows us to compete with China in the coming years, we will have failed in our fundamental responsibility as Members of Congress. If America is to have a safe, secure, and prosperous future, we have to compete and we have to win the critical minerals race with the People's Republic of China.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would ask unanimous consent that the previously scheduled recess begin immediately.

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:18 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. MOODY).

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1377

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, in just a few hours, the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act is set to expire. If we don't extend these critical authorities, we will lose one of our most effective defenses against cyber attacks as our adversaries' attacks continue to grow more aggressive and more sophisticated.

This law has protected our economy; it has protected our infrastructure; and it has protected our government for more than a decade. It allows private companies and Federal Agencies to share real-time threat information before attacks spread, before systems are compromised, and before damage becomes irreversible. If this law expires, it will be harder to protect businesses and critical infrastructure against cyber attacks, and cyber criminals and our adversaries will be emboldened to continue to try to breach our defenses.

The original law was passed with a strong bipartisan support, and there is bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate to renew these protections for another 10 years. Even the Trump administration fully agrees and the White House and the Department of Homeland Security support this 10-year extension.

A broad coalition of industry leaders are asking for Congress to act quickly to pass a long-term extension, which provides businesses with the certainty they need to know these protections will be available to them for years to come.

That is why Senator ROUNDS and I introduced a clean, bipartisan 10-year extension in April, with strong support from stakeholders who are absolutely counting on these protections. It is time to pass this bill today; otherwise, we will lose our networks, our businesses, our economy, and we will leave them exposed, vulnerable, and defenseless. We need to pass this legislation.

I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 1377 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Reserving the right to object, there is nothing better in politics than to fake outrage. "I am so outraged my program is going to go away." But you can vote this afternoon at 5 o'clock to extend your program.

Instead of all the hot air, why don't you come to the floor and tell us you are actually going to vote to keep the

government open and your program will be extended. You have a chance. Let's see how you vote this afternoon. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. I want to be clear. This is a voluntary program that businesses across the country have been able to count on for 10 years. These same companies are urging us to extend the exact same protections for another 10 years.

These cyber security protections keep our country safe. They have stopped cyber attacks that could have exposed America's private data, compromised businesses and our economy, or even taken over critical infrastructure like our electric grid and our transportation systems.

Countless businesses in every industry across the country depend on these protections. Telling them they could be eliminated again in just 2 months with a short-term CR does not give them the certainty they need to work. This is why they want the 10-year extension.

The Federal Government needs to help them prevent catastrophic attacks. We have broad bipartisan consensus, not for just a couple of months—that doesn't help anybody—but broad bipartisan consensus, including support, again, from the Trump administration, which fully supports this, to extend these authorities for the next 10 years. That will ensure that every industry in America can continue to count on these protections to be available.

If my colleague doesn't support a clean authorization—he is chair of the committee—he should have initiated a bipartisan process. He should have, perhaps, convened hearings like a chairman normally would if they actually care about an issue. The committee should have had a chance to hear from key industry stakeholders. The committee could have heard directly from officials from President Trump's White House and President Trump's Department of Homeland Security. They would tell them, as they have told everyone, that they need to pass a 10-year extension—not a couple of months, a 10-year extension—but that hasn't happened in our committee.

But if my colleague is not interested in meaningful compromise or working across the aisle on legislation in his committee's jurisdiction that is absolutely essential, then I would ask that he at least—at least—stop standing in the way of the rest of the entire U.S. Senate and broad bipartisan support in the House and pass a clean 10-year extension of this proven law.

I cannot predict the ways in which cyber criminals and adversaries will try to take advantage of this situation if we can't extend these authorities. At this moment, let's be very clear, there is only one person—one person—standing in the way. I am certainly willing to work with my colleague on his concerns about free speech. He would not

even let our committee have any kind of discussion about any legislation, including his own.

It is time to let the Senate work its will and vote to extend these cyber security protections. It is absolutely essential for this Nation's national security.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

TRIBUTE TO EDDIE HUNNELL

Mr. BUDD. Madam President, 1 year ago, Hurricane Helene brought devastating winds and recordbreaking rainfall to Western North Carolina. Families were displaced; homes were destroyed; and, tragically, lives were lost. Even in the face of devastation, North Carolinians showed remarkable strength, unity, and compassion.

Today, I rise to recognize Mr. Eddie Hunnell of Holly Springs, NC, who exemplified that spirit. On Friday, September 27, 2024, floodwaters surged through the North Fork New River in Grassy Creek, NC. Mr. Hunnell had made a 3½-hour trip to Western North Carolina to celebrate his son's wedding.

But what should have been a joyous occasion quickly turned into a crisis. As rising water carried trees, furniture, and other debris downstream, Mr. Hunnell spotted a 66-year-old Grassy Creek resident in distress, Ms. Leslie Worth. She was wearing a life jacket. She was standing in the second-story bedroom window of her home that had been knocked from its foundation.

Ms. Worth bravely jumped out of the window to save her own life. She plunged into the dangerous conditions and was swept up by the current. And without a moment's hesitation, Mr. Hunnell made the brave decision to attempt to rescue her. He steered a canoe through the flood, then, undeterred by the raging current, leapt into the water and swam to reach her. Through determination and resolve, he swam to her to safer ground, undoubtedly saving her life. This was nothing short of an act of extraordinary bravery and selflessness.

Once Ms. Worth was reunited with her husband, Mr. Hunnell welcomed the couple to join the family that evening at his son's rehearsal dinner. He knew they were without a home, without a meal, and without any warmth. He even went further by setting up a fund to help them rebuild their lives, and he was the very first to contribute.

In June, Mr. Hunnell was recognized for this extraordinary act of heroism as a recipient of the Carnegie Medal. This award honors civilians who risk death or serious physical injury, to an extraordinary degree, saving or attempting to save the lives of others. And I can think of no one more deserving than he.

The motto of the great State of North Carolina is "Esse quam videri," which means "to be rather than to seem." I firmly believe Mr. Hunnell has lived out our State's motto to the fullest. His actions remind us that in times of crisis, ordinary individuals

can perform extraordinary deeds. I am grateful for his swift, lifesaving intervention during Hurricane Helene to save an innocent life.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring him for his exemplary service. May his courage continue to be an inspiration for us all.

I yield the floor.

(Mrs. BRITT assumed the Chair.)

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, passing a clean CR this week is important for two reasons. First, passing the CR, of course, will avert a harmful and unnecessary government shutdown.

No reasonable Member on either side, Democrat or Republican, wants a government shutdown.

Now, those aren't my words. Those are actually Senator SCHUMER's words from just over a year ago.

I rise today because, once again in this Congress, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have decided to put politics ahead of the American people. You see, just a few weeks ago, we finally unpacked the logjam that they had created on President Trump's nominees. They decided that, instead of working for the American people and allowing this body to do its job, they were going to engage in unprecedented obstruction, allowing for every single person that came to this floor—insisting that they had a cloture vote, 134 out of 135 nominees—something that had historically never been done. At the rate we were going, up until Republicans finally took action to remove Democrat obstruction, President Trump, at the end of his term—at the end of his term—would have had about 800 nominees confirmed out of the 1,200 that he actually gets to select during his administration.

I didn't say at the end of this year. I didn't say at the end of this Congress. That would have been just over 400. At the end of his term, he would have only had just over two-thirds of the people that he needed to make his administration work. That is what they wanted to do. That is what they were insistent upon.

Look, the American people spoke on November 5. They heard from both sides. It was probably one of the more fruitful debates. Knowing what Vice President Harris would bring to the table—seeing that she said: I would do nothing different than Joe Biden has done—and then knowing what President Trump did his first term and what he was promising to do yet again, the American people made a very clear choice.

But yet, instead of allowing this body to focus, this body to work, this body to function, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have continued to play politics. And guess what. We are over it. And that is what we are seeing happen here today.

Make no mistake, what we want to do is pass a clean CR. Now, this means

we have, obviously, come to the end of our time of government funding. We have 12 appropriations bills that we need to get across the finish line. Getting them across the finish line is important to fund the government. And, look, we are on our path—a path greater than that, that was set by my colleagues when they were in charge, just over a year ago—to actually make great strides toward that.

So what Republicans are asking that we do is that we continue these conversations, that we continue the work that we are doing. You see, for the first time since 2018, we actually passed three appropriations bills out of this Chamber before the August State work period. We have been working diligently with our counterparts in the House to get those ready for final passage. What we are asking them to do today is to let us keep working, to let us keep doing our job for the American people. But they are consistently choosing politics over the very people they serve.

This Chamber is barreling toward a government shutdown and—make no mistake about it—there is no one to blame but the Democrats. Instead of saying yes, let's keep working, they decided to say: You know what? For 7 weeks of keeping working toward the goal of bringing these bills to the floor and actually passing them, getting them across the finish line, when we have engaged in record obstruction on other items, we are going to ask you for \$1.5 trillion—trillion—in new spending, for 7 weeks.

So they have essentially asked—you heard that right—for not a billion with a "b" but a trillion with a "t" for 7 weeks of spending, under a Biden budget, as we extend that while we work to put ourselves under a Trump budget moving forward. It is seriously partisan and unfortunate for the American people.

Their plan also asked for some other things that are deeply unserious: to allow illegal aliens to receive taxpayer-funded benefits—that is what they are asking in exchange—to send a half a billion dollars to media that functions more as propaganda than it does as an actual news outlet. And they want to eliminate the \$50 billion of investment that Republicans pledged and made to rural healthcare. And that is just the tip of the iceberg.

Here is the reality. Voters rejected all of that on November 5. The America-last spending of Democrats is something that the people of this country said we don't want any more of. President Trump and Republicans were elected to change that in historic fashion. But time and time again, it appears that the people pushing for a shutdown, the people on the other side of the aisle, are not living in reality and are caring more about pandering to the far left than they are about actually delivering results to the American people. And that is sad.

Look, this isn't an impasse where we said "let's work on these things" and

we have made no progress. We have made significant progress, and we are committed to continuing to do that, given the opportunity. Meanwhile, the Republicans have put forth a clean CR. It funds the government for 7 weeks. It puts forth no new partisan spending. And, importantly, it allows for us to have more time to get back to a semblance of regular order and pass bipartisan appropriations bills.

Enacting these appropriations bills needs to be one of our top priorities, because while the Republican-led CR is the best option for right now, it is my belief that we cannot continue to kick the can down the road. Every time we do that, it costs the American taxpayers more. It is time for us to get in this room right here and do the work of the American people.

A long-term continuing resolution would keep spending at Biden levels, and the American people neither voted for this nor could they afford it. We have an obligation to ensure the Senate gets back to doing its job. We must return to transparency, to accountability, and to regular order.

The last several months, it was blocking President Trump's nominees. Now, it is holding the government hostage with a wish list of demands.

Republicans are here to work for the American people, and, look, we are going to continue to do so. It is my hope that some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are committed to doing the same thing.

Make no mistake, if the government shuts down, if Federal workers go without a paycheck, if things go awry, that would be the Democrats' burden to bear.

It is not like there hasn't been progress. It is not like there is no plan. We have made progress on these bills. Our leader, Leader JOHN THUNE, has promised to continue to put these bills on the floor. It is past time that Democrats get serious and decide if they want to govern or if they just want to follow their leader. I hope that they choose actually doing the work of the American people and not making them pay the price for a Schumer shutdown.

Decisions need to be made in this very Chamber tonight, and I hope that our colleagues on the other side make the right one. Let us continue to work for the American people. Let us do the job that we have already started on and are committed to finishing. And let us get this Senate back functioning for the very people that we serve.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

HEALTHCARE

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I know many of my constituents are contacting me about the rising cost of healthcare. I know that many of my colleagues are saying that they are being contacted about the rising cost of healthcare.

Believe it or not, some of it is impacted by tariffs—some of it, the anxiety of what happened when Medicaid

was threatened in the Big Beautiful Bill. But most specifically now, they are hearing from their State insurance commissioners that rates are going to go up as early as October 15 in the State of Idaho and in many, many States across the country, as early as November 1, are starting to now have to make a choice. Are they going to pay for this huge increase in insurance premiums because this institution, this body, did not deal with the Affordable Care Act extensions of subsidies that provided affordable health insurance to millions of Americans?

This is something that is already going to affect the burden that rural hospitals have. It is going to burden Americans as they try to keep working, and it is going to burden an ever increasing healthcare system that is facing these costs.

I hope that we can do something, to make a commitment to focus on affordability. Why? The American people are seeing a huge cost increase in groceries, in gasoline, in everyday products. Our manufacturers are seeing increases in cost. And so this is an issue that needs to be tackled today, not in a few weeks when you are locked in to the higher rates. It is not something that can be done by the end of the year because you are going to be locked in to higher rates. This is something that Congress and the administration need to hash out now.

Now, I am an advocate of—I wish we would have hashed it out last summer. I basically started realizing in July that this was going to affect my State, when our insurance commissioner came up with what they predicted would be a 20-plus-percent increase in rates, and we started speaking with small businesses across the State who said it was going to affect their ability to keep their employees because of the cost of healthcare.

So what are we doing now? Well, instead of addressing this issue, the Affordable Care Act healthcare market rate extension of making sure that premiums don't rise significantly on many Americans, people are denying that the problem exists or that the deadline is actually here—past due, really—to affect what we think is an emergency.

Last week, my office released a report showing that dramatic increases in premiums for many States in the United States have already gotten approval, and just one chart that I will show you shows those increased rates, not just for the State of Washington—which we saw a 21-percent increase—but for many other States: Arizona, which they are proposing a 48-percent increase; Georgia, 39-percent increase; North Carolina, 29.36 percent; and Texas, 39.28 percent.

Why are they going up so much? Well, insurers are saying in their States, the primary reason, as I mentioned earlier, administration tariffs, cost of delivering the healthcare system, and the pending failure of Congress to extend the tax credits in the

Affordable Care Act. As a result, as I said, many people will be paying these higher rates, but 5 million Americans across the country, including 80,000 Washingtonians, the estimates are, will just no longer be able to afford insurance.

That is the estimate: 5 million Americans across the country, 80,000 in my State, will just be like, "Nope, can't afford insurance anymore, not going to buy it." Why is that so important? Well, because the Affordable Care Act drove down the rate of uninsured in America from about 15 percent to about 7 percent. That decrease in uncompensated care helped us reduce our overall healthcare costs too, for people who are getting insurance in many different ways.

When you have uncompensated care, the costs don't just evaporate and go into the sky. They are paid by the rest of us in the system. Failing to deal with this affects everybody's healthcare, not just those on the Affordable Care Act premium plan of extension of these credits. It affects everybody because you are increasing the cost of healthcare throughout the entire system.

I don't want to roll the dice on this and find out what happens to many of my constituents. I don't want to find out what happens when people who don't have health insurance get sick anyway and go to the emergency room or have a devastating diagnosis just because we wouldn't act. When you think about this, the ranks of people who are in this uninsured market don't stop getting sick. They do still have costs, and that uncompensated care is what drove up the cost of our healthcare system overall.

So now, as we face inflation, it is the last thing we should be doing, is to drive up the cost of anything just because we have failed to act. The last thing we need to do is discover that, on November 1, that those premiums, which will go into place as people purchase those plans, is something that we can't reverse for the future—because the market is a marketplace. It is a marketplace of insurance. If we want to affect this, we should affect it now.

In August, I asked the chairman and ranking member of the Finance Committee to hold a hearing on how to lower these costs for Americans and find ways to keep people insured and healthy. Unfortunately, the Senate Finance Committee did not even meet in September and did not schedule any hearings to actually even discuss this particular problem.

I would have hoped that there would have been an illumination with our report, as everybody realized these rates are going to get locked in, people are going to make purchase decisions in November and December, and then, as I said, lots of people will just say, "I can't afford these rates. They're insane, and now I'm going to just drop out of the marketplace. But yeah, I'm still going to get sick, and I'm still

going to cost the hospital and the part of the State that may not even be able to afford it. I'm still going to have uncompensated care costs."

All of this could have been discussed, and that is why, when we put out the report, we expressed the urgency by sending the same letter—not a big political letter, but a letter—to the ranking member and chairman of the Finance Committee, but also to the leadership of the Senate, the House, and the President, saying you need to wake up to this problem. This problem is real. It will affect our economy. It will affect millions of people, and it will affect the rest of us by driving up the cost of health insurance.

So I heard Speaker JOHNSON on the television this morning saying that extending the ACA credits is a December issue. Well, it is not really a December issue if people start, in October and November, making decisions and locking themselves into higher rates or deciding that they are not going to even buy insurance because it is too expensive.

He said, "Reforms are needed to the program." Great. We could have had that discussion in August or September, and we certainly could have it today, but I see no convening. The House isn't even here. I see no convening of people saying, "Let's get serious about these extensions and the high cost of health insurance." Families are relying on the exchange, and these decisions need to be made during this open enrollment period.

I know people are thinking, "Oh, this is such a geeky issue." Trust me: I know that many Americans are frustrated over enrollment periods for health insurance period, okay? They are always challenged by the fact that an employer or this healthcare system—yes, we need to keep working to improve the healthcare system. But right now, we don't want to lose millions of people from the healthcare system just because we don't want to talk about it and somebody wants to talk about it later.

To enroll by December 15, you need to know what the premium costs are. To get coverage starting on January 1, you need to enroll by December 15. So that means you have to know what this situation is all about now. When these insurance commissioners across the country—go back to those rates—started publishing those rates, that is when everybody should have woken up and said, "What the heck are we talking about?" Thirty, 40, almost 40 percent in Arizona, 40 percent. What are we talking about?

Insurance commissioners are proposing—oh, by the way, maybe in a few red States, they knew it was so bad they didn't even want to put the information out there. Our report published a lot of this, and people weren't even thinking about it. They weren't even thinking about or letting people put out the information about how high the rates were going to be. So why would you do that? Why not address

the underlying issue and say, "What are we doing about the high cost of healthcare?"

So my colleagues on the other side are so confident. Let's hear what their proposal is. Let's hear what they are going to do—because I am pretty sure the tariffs, the Medicaid cuts, and this proposal not to deal with the Affordable Care Act extension are driving up these rates to extraordinary rates that are going to hurt all Americans by making healthcare more expensive.

So I will just say we didn't even have a hearing in the committee of jurisdiction on the fact that we cut a trillion dollars out of the healthcare system and stripped Medicaid coverage from 11 million Americans. We didn't even have a hearing on that. So, our constituents, Mr. President, should be listened to. We need to address this issue. We want Members to figure out how to make healthcare more affordable for millions of Americans.

The 119th Congress thus far has squandered too much time focusing too little on this issue. We need to roll up our sleeves and focus on immediate, real solutions that impact millions of Americans. Together, we can figure out a way to extend these expiring credits and come up with solutions to lower those costs, and I urge my colleagues to do so as soon as possible. The American people are depending on us to help them not face these enormous inflationary costs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority whip.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we are just hours away from the deadline to fund the Federal Government. This task of funding our government is one of the most important responsibilities vested in Congress.

This is not my first rodeo. I have been through shutdowns before. The last one and one of the longest was in President Trump's first term. So here in the second term comes another government shutdown just 9 months into his Presidency.

Accomplishing this funding of our government requires bipartisan compromise. Do the math. To pass anything of substance in the U.S. Senate, you need 60 votes. There are 53 Republicans and 47 Democrats. You need at least seven Democratic votes to join all the Republicans if you want to have a bipartisan rollcall that passes. So that would suggest to any President and any Member of the majority party that it is a good idea to sit down with the Senators from the other side of the aisle before you reach the shutdown phase of this conversation.

If we fail to fund this government, farmers won't receive their payments and loans they need to stay afloat facing President Trump's tariffs, medical breakthroughs and research will be put on hold, and American servicemembers and thousands of Federal employees across the country will be forced to

work without pay. But unfortunately, we have seen little interest on the other side to sit down and talk about it and to reach a compromise. The Republicans control the White House, they control the Senate, they control the House of Representatives, and they have decided the best approach is: Don't negotiate with the Democrats. Give them a "take it or leave it" and let's see what happens.

Despite knowing since March that government funding was going to run out tonight, President Donald Trump waited until yesterday—yesterday—to meet with Senate minority leader CHUCK SCHUMER and House minority leader HAKEEM JEFFRIES. What was he waiting for? He understands the President bears major responsibility if a shutdown takes place.

Think about it. He waited until the day before the government funding deadline to finally sit down and talk to both political parties.

Republican Majority Leader THUNE said he is committed to passing appropriations bills through regular order. I agree. I am on the Appropriations Committee. I think we are doing a pretty good job, and we can do better.

We also want to pass government spending bills, but we refuse to rubberstamp President Trump's harmful cuts and reckless actions. Yet, instead of being here to do the work of funding our government, the Republicans in the House are gone. They left Washington last week and don't plan to return until next week. That doesn't help at all.

The House must stop playing political games and come to work so we can actually avoid this shutdown. Republicans must take responsibility for the government they control—the government they control.

White House Republicans are on vacation. Their refusal to prevent a shutdown will ruin millions of Americans' travel plans.

During a shutdown, air traffic controllers and TSA employees work without pay. That is not reassuring. This means delays and longer wait times for travelers at airports across the country, just like the last time President Donald Trump shut down the government in 2018 for 35 long days. It took pressure from the air traffic controllers to finally end that Trump shutdown.

Our aviation system will continue to bear the effects because a shutdown would pause hiring and training programs for air traffic controllers at a time when we should be improving safety.

Does it make you feel more confident to take a flight and realize that that air traffic controller is working without pay or that the testing and training of the air traffic controllers have been delayed because of a shutdown?

So the next time you are sitting in an airport and you see your flight delayed, you can thank those who didn't want to sit down and talk before the shutdown faced us.

Unfortunately, the Trump administration is preparing to weaponize the shutdown and continue their attacks on the Federal workforce. Without any rhyme or reason, they have been chopping off thousands and thousands of Federal employees. Sometimes employees are doing essential work, and they beg them to come back to work. Some do; some don't.

Last week, the Director of the OMB, Russell Vought, sent out a memo stating that any government employee who seeks funding for their role lapse because of a shutdown would be fired if their work does not align with the President's objectives.

They are promising a big shutdown of the Federal workforce. These firings jeopardize progress in Federal Agencies—Agencies already indiscriminately gutted by the Trump administration. The Trump administration has begged fired employees to return to work at Agencies like the National Weather Service and the Department of Energy.

Even Republican Senators—some—agree that government employees are not pawns to be played with during the debate on government funding. These employees and their families deserve a better boss. But the Trump administration apparently doesn't care. They are content to cause continual chaos across the government to score cheap points.

The American people know who is making the government work and who is trying to destroy it. For months, Democrats have been ready and willing to work with Republicans to avoid the awful effects of a shutdown.

Why should the average American care about a shutdown? What import does it have to you and your life and your family? It is basic. It is healthcare. That is what this is about on the Democratic side. We think this is a battle worth fighting.

We face a prospect of some 24 million Americans either losing their health insurance in the next several weeks or seeing dramatic increases in their premium payments. Some will have to get a different insurance policy with higher deductibles. Some won't be able to afford health insurance at all.

Take a look at what the cutback in Medicaid is going to do to hospitals across our country. Illinois is a great State—very diverse, with the beautiful, big city of Chicago and a lot of smaller, rural area towns as well. These rural areas count on hospitals like no other place in our State. They are literally the lifeline. If these hospitals start to close, it not only presents a hardship when it comes to medical care, it hurts the economy of the region. Imagine trying to keep or attract a company to bring their business to your town when you have just lost your hospital.

This cutback in the big, beautiful budget bill of the Trump administration of paying into Medicaid is exactly the wrong thing to do for my home State of Illinois and for most other

States. We want to make sure that doesn't happen. We want to stop this cutback in healthcare quality and availability across this country. That is what we are holding out for. It isn't some big, beautiful border wall; it is what American families have to pay for health insurance each month.

You ought to see the numbers if we don't do anything. The so-called ACA tax credits means there is a helping hand for families in income situations where they are eligible to pay for health insurance. The Republicans eliminated this helping hand, and now that the premiums are going to go up, we have already received notice in Illinois of several insurance companies that have gone out of business. It is a problem—a really serious problem—in terms of the cost of premiums for families. So that is what this is about.

Bringing down the government is not a good policy by and large, but neither is cutting the healthcare for 25 million Americans. So that is what we are bringing this issue together on.

Can we have a sitdown with Democrats and Republicans and reach an agreement? Yes, we can. We can start tonight. There is no reason why we shouldn't.

So I hope that my friends on the other side of the aisle will understand that uninsured Americans and Americans with health insurance that they can't afford is a serious hardship for working families. I hope my Republican colleagues will join us in a bipartisan conversation. It is long overdue.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

NOMINATION OF WILLIAM WHITE

MR. Kaine. Mr. President, I rise to discuss a vote that the Senate will take later this week on en bloc Executive nominations. The vote will likely come either tomorrow or possibly Friday. There is an en bloc of approximately 100 nominations that we will be considering, and I rise to talk about the nomination of one individual—Bill White to be the U.S. Ambassador to Belgium.

I regret that we are taking up nominations en bloc. I think there are good reasons to reform the nominations process. I think we probably have to have Senate confirmation for too many people. But I didn't believe a few weeks ago in the Senate action that allowed people to be lumped together because my view was that that causes individuals who were in the en bloc not to get the appropriate scrutiny they should get. I viewed the action, bluntly, as a little less about advancing nominations as raising the risk of hiding nominations in large groups where individuals would not get the appropriate scrutiny, and I believe that very strongly to be the case with Mr. White.

Mr. White is President Trump's nominee to be Ambassador to an important U.S. ally, Belgium, the headquarters of NATO. Mr. White has done some good things in his life, and I don't

dispute that, and I know he has been a strong supporter of President Trump, as are virtually all of the Trump appointees, many of whom I have voted for. I haven't done this calculation, but I probably have a track record on the Democratic side of voting for as high a percentage of President Trump's nominees, both in term 1 and term 2, as just about anyone because I do believe as a former Governor that your election does carry with it a mandate to be able to assemble a team of like-minded people. Even if I might disagree with you, President Trump was elected, and he should have the ability to assemble a team of like-minded people.

But I do carefully scrutinize the character, judgment, and qualifications of the individuals who are put before us for important positions, and this nomination of this individual for this country at this time I view as so uniquely bad that I wanted to take the time to come to the floor and talk about why.

What I am going to talk about is Mr. White's judgment as evidenced by his social media postings. I have a whole lot of examples I could use, but I am going to just narrow it down to the ones that I think are a true window into this individual's judgment and character and that demonstrate that he is not suitable to represent the United States in a critical ambassadorial position.

On May 16, 2023, he tweeted out about one of our colleagues, Senator GRAHAM of South Carolina:

Graham is a snake.

He has tweeted out many bad things about Democratic colleagues that I am not going to post before you, but someone who says about LINDSEY GRAHAM that he is a snake is not demonstrating the judgment you need to be an ambassador representing the United States in Belgium.

Mr. White fell down the rabbit hole of election conspiracy in 2020 and has repeatedly tweeted and posted his belief that the 2020 election was not accurately called and that Donald Trump actually won rather than President Biden. Now, I think any intelligent person recognizes that as a conspiracy theory that most fourth graders wouldn't be gullible enough to fall for, but Mr. White has tweeted it over and over and over again.

He has gone beyond just asserting that Donald Trump won the election in 2020. He has actually gone much, much further than that. In the runup to the election of 2024—so this is now 4 years after the 2020 election—Mr. White was posting material and reposting material about Georgia's secretary of state Brad Raffensperger, a Republican, claiming that he had acted improperly in the 2020 election.

Lock [Georgia's secretary of state]—

And forgive me; this is a quote.

Lock . . . this mother eff up.

That is what he is calling to happen to the Republican secretary of state in

Georgia. And this was recent. This was in August of 2024. This is not years and years and years ago.

Mr. White went on to continue in this extreme rhetoric in the aftermath of President Trump's election in 2024. Within the days to follow, shortly after the election, he basically says Donald Trump won Georgia—that is referring to the 2024 election—and that it is high time now to legitimately prosecute the Georgia secretary of state and Governor Kemp, the Republican Governor of Georgia. Mr. White is calling for them both to be prosecuted, and this was just at the time that Donald Trump won the 2024 election.

OK. Donald Trump was elected President in 2024. Why are you still so focused on a campaign of retribution against Georgia Republicans whom you were urging to be locked up and prosecuted?

To be an ambassador, you need to have some judgment, you need to have some diplomacy. You will deal with tough issues. Belgium is not a big country, but Belgium is a very important country. It has been a U.S. ally for a very long time, and it is the headquarters of NATO, which has a huge importance in the world right now.

Putting somebody into a position like this who puts out negative tweets about LINDSEY GRAHAM and who is encouraging Republican officials in Georgia to be prosecuted and locked up—I think those would be disqualifying in and of themselves, but as I was looking at this individual's social media account, I came upon something else that a lot of people didn't notice, because it seemed odd, but I did a little bit of research into it, and I want to focus on it.

Mr. White, in May of 2024—months before President Trump's election—retweeted a post from an individual named Dries Van Langenhove, with a video from this individual. The video is a lengthy video wherein this individual, Dries Van Langenhove, says:

This Friday, they may send me to prison for years, so this video is my last chance. They are trying to destroy me, but with your help, we will destroy them. Free Dries.

Among the other tweets of calling a colleague a snake and calling for people to be locked up, this one seemed odd. Who is Dries Van Langenhove? Who is Dries Van Langenhove? Dries Van Langenhove is a convicted, Holocaust-denying, pro-violence anti-Semite in Belgium. The tweet that Mr. White posted was his video the night before he was sentenced to a year in prison for inciting violence and denying the Holocaust.

This is an article from POLITICO Europe in March of 2024, and it talks about Mr. Van Langenhove. Title: "Belgium's far-right prodigy gets prison term for inciting violence."

Dries Van Langenhove, a political activist and leader of a Flemish-nationalist youth movement called Schild & Vrienden, was convicted of inciting violence and denying the Holocaust, the Ghent criminal court [ruled].

[He] revelled in Nazi ideas that caused much suffering. He wants to undermine society," a judge said when announcing the ruling.

Why would Mr. White, in March of 2024, even know who Dries Van Langenhove was?

When I saw this, as I was researching this prior to the hearing on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I had no idea who Dries Van Langenhove was. I wondered, Why is Mr. White platforming this individual I know nothing about? Then, as I read it, I find that he is a notorious violence-promoting, Holocaust-denying anti-Semite criminal convict in Belgium. This is a big deal.

The ADL says that of any nation in Europe, Belgium may have seen the most spike in anti-Semitic behavior since October 7.

Some of you might remember the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris a couple of years ago, pre-October 7. There was a similar attack on the same day in Belgium, an anti-Semitic attack. Belgians have been charged with crimes of vandalism and religious-based violence and attacks on the Holocaust museum in both Belgium, Brussels, and Paris. And the Belgian Government is really working hard to try to deal with this cancer of anti-Semitism in this nation.

As far as I know, Mr. Langenhove is the only individual who has been successfully prosecuted in Belgium for Holocaust-denying, inciting violence, and reveling in pro-Nazi ideas. The material that Bill White posted was Mr. Van Langenhove seeking support in donations to help him avoid accountability for his words and actions.

Mr. White's work in the past might qualify him to serve in some capacities. I am not saying there isn't a position, one that doesn't require diplomacy, where his skills might be necessary, but this particular appointment is an insult to Belgium—a nation that is trying to deal with a deep, deep challenge in anti-Semitism.

For the United States to send as an ambassador to that nation someone who has platformed the far-right prodigy who has received a prison term for inciting anti-Semitic violence is a slap in the face of this important ally.

I started by saying I am worried that the fact that this nomination is being slid into the middle of a big block of nominations means it won't get the attention that it deserves. Traditionally, on a nomination like this, we might get 1 or 2 hours on the floor to focus on this particular individual.

My colleague Senator MERKLEY, as we were discussing the change that allowed en bloc nominations, proposed an alternative where you could remove a name from the en bloc if you wanted to actually have some ability to focus on it. That effort was unsuccessful. But I want to raise this today.

This is already getting press in Belgium. The hearing itself, where it came to light that Mr. White was platforming Dries Van Langenhove, is

getting press in Belgium; it is getting press elsewhere in Europe; and it is being examined as: Wait. How does the United States feel about this country and this relationship? How does the United States feel about qualifications for diplomats if someone who is so intrepid in his speech but also is platforming Belgian Holocaust deniers gets the plum position to be our Ambassador to Belgium?

So my hope—and in life, I have often learned that high hopes are great and so are low expectations. I will say in standing here today, I stand here with high hopes and low expectations. My hope is that some of my Republican colleagues might look at this and say: This is a bridge too far. This is too important a country and anti-Semitism is too important an issue to send, with the imprimatur of U.S. Ambassador and to this ally of the United States, somebody who is platforming and promoting an anti-Semitic, Holocaust-denying convicted criminal.

That is my hope that when we have this vote later in the week, we might decide that the United States can do better by our ally.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, hurricane season ends November 30—2 months left to go. Last week marked the first anniversary of Hurricane Helene, and I see from reports that the area of North Carolina most affected is still terribly affected. It was such a severe storm that people in Louisiana went from Louisiana to help North Carolina and other States with their emergency operations on the ground.

This weekend saw two category 4 storms churning in the western Atlantic. Thankfully, they do not appear that they will hit our coast. Still, the storms remind people in Louisiana and other States that flooding is not a matter of if but, rather, when.

Now, Democrats, as we know, are pushing us toward a government shutdown. What does that mean for the National Flood Insurance Program? Imagine you are about to close on a house in 2 days and the bank requires you to have flood insurance. If you are in a special flood hazard area—by the way, over half of Louisiana is a special flood hazard area—and you are purchasing a house with help from a federally backed loan, you will not be closing on that house, nor will you be able to renew your existing policy, all because Democrats have rejected a clean continuing resolution to keep the government open.

Let me repeat: They are walking away from a bill that simply extends

the existing budget for 7 weeks to allow for further negotiation. Instead, they demand a highly partisan bill which would add more than \$1 trillion to our Nation's debt. They want taxpayer-funded healthcare for illegal immigrants, transgender surgery for minors, and to cut \$50 billion from the rural hospital fund Republicans created as part of our working families tax cuts bill.

Now, back to flood insurance, Americans are left wondering how a shutdown will affect them. While Democrats are writing checks to the far left, folks are wondering if they can close on their house.

Now, I will tell you what the American people care about. They want the government to do its job. They want disaster recovery when needed. They want flood insurance that works. They want rural hospitals to stay open. They want energy security and a balanced budget—not trillion-dollar add-ons that only serve a political agenda. The American people deserve accountability. They expect Congress to put their needs before partisan politics.

If this shutdown happens, it means that the National Flood Insurance Program cannot renew policies. That is 500,000 people in Louisiana and millions across the country unable to renew policies while we are still in hurricane season. It will mean delays in disaster aid and emergency response coordination. It means uncertainty for families still recovering from Hurricane Helene and other past storms. Now, this is personal for folks in my State.

If Democrats would stop trying to please the fringe of their party and start focusing on the real, immediate needs of the American people—like keeping the government open, maintaining flood insurance, and protecting access to rural healthcare—we could solve this today.

So I ask my fellow Senators who are Democrats: Who are you working for? Are you working for the American families watching the weather, hoping the next storm doesn't wipe out everything they have built? Are you working for veterans waiting on care, the seniors relying on Social Security checks, or the communities who count on rural hospitals in a crisis? Or are you working for political activists and special interest groups that have nothing to do with the lives of the people you were elected to serve?

Mr. President, the path forward is simple: Pass a clean bill to keep the government open.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. President, middle-class Americans are taking it on the chin. If you ask anybody buying groceries and you start talking about high grocery prices, their heads just start to nod. American farmers can't hire workers to pick their crops. Foreign products are being tariffed. Beef and coffee prices are through the roof. For the first time ever since it has been tracked, ground beef is over \$6 a pound,

and it keeps rising. To put that into perspective, it was under \$4 when President Trump left office in 2021.

People can't afford to live. If you combine the cost of the things they absolutely need—their healthcare, their flood insurance, property and casualty or homeowners insurance, car insurance, mortgages, car payments—after that, they are sitting around an empty kitchen table, worried as to whether there is enough left in their pocketbook to buy the groceries to feed their family.

Now, with 67 percent of Americans saying they are living paycheck to paycheck, you can imagine how many empty kitchen tables there are.

Last week, I got a message from a woman in my State who lives on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. She told me this is the problem she is facing: She can't afford to live and to pay for her groceries. By the way, she is a teacher—a good job—and has been for 26 years. But she can't afford to live and pay for groceries?

The middle class is taking it on the chin, and a lot of Americans are in the same situation as she is. No matter how hard they work, no matter how many jobs they work—sometimes two or three—they can't keep up.

Now, since 2000, housing demand has grown more than housing supply. Roughly 46 percent of Americans let their credit card payments roll over month to month because they cannot afford to pay in full. That is almost 50 percent of people in the United States who are not paying their credit card bills, and that is with 21 percent to 26 percent interest rates on them. Almost a quarter of Americans don't think they will ever pay off their credit card debt. And the hole keeps getting deeper.

Now, Republicans are trying to address this. In the working families tax cuts bill, we increased wages by eliminating taxes on tips and taxes on overtime. Most seniors will not pay taxes on their Social Security payments. We increased the child tax credit. We incentivized companies to start building in the United States now, instead of waiting for 10 years. We attract private investment into low-income communities by giving investors a tax break in exchange for developing economically distressed communities. Our goal is to create jobs—better paying jobs—as we spur this revitalization.

We can increase affordable housing for families and workers by expanding and strengthening the low-income housing tax credit, which will help build more than 1.6 million affordable homes nationwide over the next decade.

Again, we give tax incentives now for those better paying manufacturing and construction jobs, while working to decrease the high cost of healthcare with, if you will, programs to incentivize the education of more nurses, to lower the cost of prescription drugs, and to lower the cost of health insurance.

We have proposed ways to lower the cost of the National Flood Insurance Program, which in my State is one thing that just saps from people's pocketbooks. Now, the government shutdown will not help. It creates unnecessary worry and puts a strain on working families, veterans, and folks living on a fixed income.

The American middle class is taking it on the chin. Republicans are working to give the American people hope instead of one more body blow.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, well, it looks like we are going to have a shutdown. What does that tell us? I will tell you what it tells me. It is simply that much more evidence that human evolution is a slow, slow process. I thought humans had advanced more as a species, but, apparently, we haven't.

What do I mean by a shutdown? Well, we can't keep government open without a budget, and tonight, at midnight, our current budget expires, unless we vote to maintain the status quo and continue the current budget as we negotiate a new one.

Many of my Democratic friends say: Well, what is the problem? The Republicans are in charge. The President is a Republican, and the Republicans have a majority in the Senate, and the Republicans have a majority in the House. What is the problem?

They know what the problem is. We can't pass a budget, we can't keep government open just with Republican votes here in the Senate. We only have 53 Republicans. We need seven Democrats to join with us. So for my Democratic colleagues to say, "Well, the Republicans are in charge, and they don't need us," they know that is not accurate. And that is what is going on.

Now, we have had a few shutdowns before, and every shutdown is different. But most shutdowns are a combination of both policy and politics in varying degrees. This shutdown, in terms of policy, makes absolutely no sense—none. What we have proposed to our Democratic colleagues and the minority leader, Senator SCHUMER, is to make no changes to the current budget. We just want to continue the current budget and keep government open until just before Thanksgiving to give us more time to negotiate a permanent budget.

We did that many times when President Biden was President and when the Democrats had the majority. In fact, we did it 13 times. Not only have Republicans done it, but Democrats have routinely done it.

But this time the Democrats have said: No, no, no, no, no. We want more.

And you may be thinking: OK, that is reasonable. What do you want?

Well, it is not reasonable. In effect, what the Democrats are saying to us is that we are going to close government

unless you agree—you, Republicans—to make it bigger. We don't want the status quo. We want you to commit to spending \$1.5 trillion more than you are spending now, and we—the Democrats are saying—are going to tell you how to spend it.

First, they want us to repeal all of the Medicaid reforms that we did in the reconciliation bill. Some call it the One Big Beautiful Bill.

The One Big Beautiful Bill would not reduce Medicaid. In fact, it would go up about 2 percent every year as a result of our bill. But it would say to people who are on Medicaid who aren't eligible for Medicaid that you are not going to get Medicaid anymore. Dual eligibles, people who sign up in Louisiana and Mississippi—that is fraud—under our bill, they would be thrown off. The Democrats want them put back on.

Under our changes in the One Big Beautiful Bill that the Democrats want us to reverse, you would have to satisfy certain income levels to be on Medicaid. The law says, if you make too much money, you can't get Medicaid because Medicaid is for the poor. In my State, we have found people, through audits, making \$120,000 a year on Medicaid. So our bill, which the Democrats want us to repeal after just passing it, would say to those people that if you don't meet the income limits, you can't get Medicaid.

So that is the first demand of the Democrats: Take out all of the reforms we made to Medicaid in the reconciliation bill and throw them out the window.

No. 2, they want to extend the ObamaCare subsidies. What does that mean? Well first let me say, Obamacare was a mistake, and we know that now. When President Obama passed ObamaCare, we were told that our lives would be better; our lives have been worse. We were told it would make health insurance more accessible and more affordable; it has done neither.

On the non-Medicaid part of ObamaCare, we have got—I don't know—20, 25 million Americans who are accessing it. And for the most part, about 90 percent of them are low-income families, but the rest are making huge sums of money. Some are making \$160,000 a year getting ObamaCare subsidized by taxpayers. And that is not the way it was supposed to be.

How did we get here? It is simple. During the pandemic, when people were being laid off or losing their jobs or couldn't work, President Biden ran through a bill to enlarge the subsidies. He took the cap off the amount that you need to earn in order to get ObamaCare, and those subsidies, at the end of this year, are about to run out.

Now, the Republicans have said: We will sit down with our Democratic friends and talk about how to extend them, but we want to reform the program because it is not right that people making \$125,000, \$150,000, \$250,000, \$200,000 a year are getting their health

insurance subsidized by the Federal Government.

That is bone-deep, down-to-the-marrow stupid. But the Democrats—Senator SCHUMER and his colleagues—have said: Nope. We will shut the government down unless you agree automatically to extend these subsidies, which were passed near the pandemic, after the pandemic is over permanently.

And that is just some of my colleagues' demands. I mean, you need—you need an Excel spreadsheet to be able to follow their demands. Their demands to keep government open, you can stack them here; you could stand on them and paint the ceiling. And that is not much of an exaggeration.

When Senator SCHUMER announced these demands, that is when I knew; I knew it in a nanosecond: We are going to have a shutdown because my colleagues—my Democratic colleagues—are very smart people, and Senator SCHUMER is a smart person. And he knew when he announced these demands that I could tell he wasn't serious. He knew they weren't serious, and he knew neither the President nor the other Members of Congress were going to accept them.

You know what, many Democrats know they are unreasonable as well. So that is why I say the policy part of this makes absolutely no sense, and that is because this isn't about policy. This shutdown is about politics.

Now, parties change just like the human experience changes over time. Political parties change. My party has changed; so has the Democratic Party. And there is a wing of the Democratic Party—I call it the socialist wing. Some less charitable people call it the loon wing of the Democratic Party, and they are in charge right now.

And the nonloon, nonsocialist Democrats are scared to death of them. This particular wing of the Democratic Party that is in the ascendancy, what do they believe? They believe—they try to outweird each other all the time.

They hate—if you listen to them, they hate Thomas Jefferson; they hate Abraham Lincoln; they hate George Washington; they hate Dr. Seuss; they hate Mr. Potato Head.

They think our kids should be able to change genders back and forth at recess—kids—and if it is their preference, should be able to undergo sex-change operations while minors paid by you, the taxpayers. They believe that.

They believe in open borders. They believe that if you support the law, which says you have to be vetted to come into our country—if you support the law, you are a racist. I think if you support the law, you are being prudent, but they believe in open borders.

My Democratic friends are able to elect a new mayor in New York City who is a member of the loon wing. He is a self-avowed socialist. He has said if the Prime Minister of Israel comes to New York City, he will have him arrested.

But this is not the majority of Democrats that believe this. I don't think

that for a second. And I know many of my Democratic colleagues here don't believe that. But the loon wing, the socialist wing, the angry Gary Bussey wing of the Democratic Party is in ascendancy, and they have got a lot of power, an enormous amount of power.

Many of my Democratic colleagues in the Senate are scared of them. The loon wing is mad at many of my Democratic colleagues in the Senate. They shouldn't be, but they are. Therefore, many of my Democratic colleagues in the Senate are scared of the loon wing, and they want the loon wing to love them.

The loon wing will never love them. They are better off doing the right thing, and they know what the right thing to do is. But that is why I say this is a political decision. That is why we are going to shut government down.

Now, once you shut government down, unless you are prepared to leave it shut down permanently—and maybe my Democratic colleagues are, but I don't think so. Maybe I am naive, but I still think many of my Democratic colleagues in the Senate know better. Once you shut the government down, you have got to get it back open.

How are they going to get it back open? We are not going to agree to their demands—\$1.5 trillion. They know we are not going to agree to it.

So how is my friend Senator SCHUMER going to get the government back open? You know, there is a famous movie line. I don't remember the movie. I think Denzel Washington said the line. I love Denzel Washington. He is what cool looks like. The guy is awesome. He is a total bomb. I love Denzel Washington.

But anyway, I think he said in one movie: If you pray for rain—if you pray for rain, you better be prepared to deal with the mud.

And truer words were never spoken.

So if you want a shutdown, I say to my Democratic friends, you better be prepared to deal with the mud.

How are you going to get it back open? How are you going to get it back open? I wouldn't want to be in their shoes to have to make that decision.

Let me just say a few words—every time we do a shutdown, it scares the living daylights out of the American people, especially our elderly. It breaks my heart. All of us get phone calls from folks scared to death they are not going to get their Social Security check or they are not going to be able to see their doctor. And it just breaks my heart. So I want to give them a little bit of assurance.

During the shutdown, the executive branch will be in charge, and the Trump administration is not going to do anything to hurt our elderly. I want to assure them of that. If you are receiving a Social Security check or Medicare or Medicaid or veterans disability, your checks are going to continue. We will make sure of that. The Trump administration will make sure of that. Government may be shut down,

but essential workers will still be there to make sure those checks are sent out.

If you are hungry and you don't have money to eat, we are not going to let you starve to death. The administration is going to continue payments—some people call it SNAP; I call it food stamps—and we will continue the payments for the Women, Infants, and Children's Program. Most of us refer to that as WIC.

You will still get your mail. Don't worry about that. The Postal Service will be working through the shutdown. If you depend, for healthcare, on your Veterans' Administration and VA medical centers, they are going to remain open. So I don't want you to be scared about that.

Now, you are going to notice an impact. Probably, we have got 2 million to 2½ million Federal employees—probably 750,000 aren't going to be on the job. Under the law, they have to go home. So you will notice an impact.

You will notice it in our parks. You will notice it in our museums here in Washington if you are visiting. You will notice it in many of the Federal Agencies. That is the law. They can't come to work in a shutdown—doesn't matter who initiates the shutdown.

You know, we still have a little time, midnight tonight. We are going to be taking some votes here in a few minutes, give our Democratic colleagues one last chance—one last chance—to do the right thing. And I certainly—I certainly—hope they accept it.

With that, Mr. President, I appreciate your patience.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, Democrats do not want a shutdown. Democrats also do not want millions of American families to go bankrupt next year because their healthcare premiums more than doubled. Democrats do not want people to get kicked off their healthcare, get sick, or even die. Democrats want to stop our rural hospitals from closing and laying off more staff.

We have been clear about this for weeks and weeks and weeks. All along, Democrats have made clear we are ready to hammer out a solution to prevent a shutdown and save people's healthcare. But I am afraid that at every step of the way, Republican leadership has made clear they would rather shut down the government than make sure people can afford healthcare. Apparently, working with Democrats to save American families money and keep the government open is too much for Republican leadership

because their plan so far has been to let healthcare premiums double—double—next year and insist that Democrats swallow a bill that does nothing on healthcare.

President Trump and Republicans in Congress would rather shut down the government than have serious negotiations to lower costs, save healthcare, and prevent a shutdown.

Unfortunately, Republicans decided on the shutdown track weeks ago and have done nothing to steer away from that cliff. This is not hard to understand. Republican leadership has not been subtle.

If Republicans were serious about avoiding a shutdown, they would not have skipped town last week, and Speaker JOHNSON wouldn't be refusing to return lawmakers until after the funding deadline.

If Republicans were serious about avoiding a shutdown, they wouldn't be holding a vote on a bill that already failed and that, I should say, actually got fewer votes than Democrats' bill since eight Republican Senators didn't even bother to show up to take that vote.

If Republican leadership was serious about avoiding a shutdown, they wouldn't be refusing to hold the vote until the last minute.

If Republican leadership was serious about avoiding a shutdown, Trump wouldn't say:

Don't bother dealing with Democrats.

He wouldn't shrug his shoulders and say:

If it has to shut down, it will shut down.

If Republican leadership was serious about avoiding a shutdown, they would not have waited until the last possible moment to hold the meeting that could have happened weeks ago, and they would have listened and negotiated at that meeting instead of just saying "my way or the highway."

Ask yourself this: If Donald Trump and Republican leadership were serious about preventing a shutdown, would Trump be tweeting out completely unserious, AI videos riddled with lies, debunked conspiracies, and mariachi music? Would they be toying with the lives of public servants and threatening to fire more of them when they know the vital role that they all play in providing services to the American people? Come on.

The President is thrilled to be shutting things down and sowing division, not working to solve the problem. He is showing every day how unserious he is in this moment.

Let's look at this another way. What would the Trump administration and Republicans be doing if they wanted a shutdown? Well, if President Trump and Republicans wanted a shutdown, they might be planning how to cause as much damage as possible, planning how they would hurt women and children who need vital nutrition assistance.

The administration might be planning to conduct a shutdown as a pre-

text to conduct more of the mass firings we have seen for months and inflict more pain. Republicans might openly talk about how Trump "welcomes" a shutdown and how they will use it to advance their extreme agenda—exactly like Russ Vought and his team at OMB are doing and have been doing.

If President Trump wanted a shutdown, he might be scheduling meetings with Democratic leaders, only to cancel them and finally reschedule them at the last possible moment—exactly as he just did.

If Republican leadership wanted a shutdown, they might mischaracterize what Democrats' position is because they know that refusing to lower costs and protect people's healthcare, which is what they have been doing, is not popular. And, of course, mischaracterizing Democrats' positions is exactly what Republican leadership has been doing.

I swear, the only way President Trump knows how to compose a sentence is noun, verb, illegal immigrant. And hey, why not throw in "transgender" for good measure? That is how he aims to sow division and hatred.

Are they serious?

American citizens across the country are starting to get letters now warning that their premiums are set to double. Hospitals are already closing or laying off staff and not for no reason in particular—this healthcare crisis is happening explicitly because of Republican policy decisions.

Instead of talking with us about addressing healthcare from the start, Republicans decided to pass a partisan CR. They decided they would do nothing about the fact that healthcare premiums are about to skyrocket. They decided they preferred a shutdown because they don't want to act in time to prevent families from paying dearly with exploding healthcare costs.

Good luck explaining that to the American people.

Good luck arguing: Sorry Republicans left town until the eleventh hour and shut down the government, but, you see, we wanted to make sure you couldn't afford healthcare.

Good luck saying that to your constituents.

Good luck saying: You don't understand, those radical Democrats demanded we stop your premiums from more than doubling next year.

It is not going to fly. The American people are a whole lot smarter than that.

Despite all this, Republican leadership is pretending they want to talk about healthcare later. The reality Republicans won't talk about is that higher premiums are being announced right now. Let's be clear about that because it underscores why addressing healthcare is so urgent.

The reason we need to start this conversation right now is because people will receive letters in the mail with

their new rates next month. In Idaho, open enrollment will begin October 15. We already know those rates are going to be much higher if Republicans insist on inaction. We already know millions of people are going to start losing their insurance. They will be priced out if we don't get this dealt with soon.

It is worth noting that according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, a quarter—a quarter—of our farmers and ranchers are enrolled through the healthcare marketplace, and nearly one-half of marketplace enrollees are small business owners, small business workers, or self-employed.

Why do Republicans want to price farmers out of healthcare? Why don't they care about small businesses and their workers?

I heard about one family in my home State of Washington who learned that if Republicans get their way on this, their healthcare premium could jump from \$278 a month to as much as \$1,800 a month. And they are far from alone in staring down a huge, huge healthcare increase if Republicans refuse to act now. Millions of families are going to see their healthcare costs jump by thousands of dollars. That is why we have to act. That is what Democrats want to avoid. That is what we want to avoid, and we know we have to do this now, but still, Republican leadership has refused to start that conversation.

Meanwhile, Democrats are at the table. We have ideas ready to go. Democrats put forward our proposal for funding the government—not, as Republicans are pretending, as a “take it or leave it” demand but a proposal, one with several key issues we want to discuss with Republicans.

We want to talk about how we stop Republicans' Medicaid cuts before our families get kicked off their healthcare and before Republican cuts shutter many of our rural hospitals.

We want to talk about how we can stop Russ Vought from stealing money for cancer research.

We want to talk about how we save the healthcare tax credits that tens of millions depend on before those higher premiums kick in and get locked in, before families decide they just can't afford their coverage—in short, before it is too late—because if Republicans insist on sitting on their hands, if they decide to wait until the last minute to finally work with us to save these credits, 1½ million Americans will lose their healthcare. Again, that is if we do pass an extension at the last minute. If Republicans never get serious about this at all, it is going to be even worse. But even delay has a real cost and one that is paid for by our families. So it is time for Republicans to get serious.

Despite what Republicans are pretending, Democrats are not asking for the Moon here. We are literally just insisting that Congress take action to address the looming healthcare crisis that they themselves caused. It is shocking that Republican leaders are

digging in so deep against doing this now. If nothing changes, that is a pretty ominous sign.

I hope, despite the completely partisan path Republicans are on right now, they will come to their senses and come to the table because I don't just want us to keep the government open with a deal brokered by both sides; I want to stop the enormous price increase that is about to hit families. I want us to ultimately get those full-year funding bills that help people—I want those to get signed into law.

Here we are. I have to say that right now, what we see is Russ Vought trying to hold government workers hostage. Right now, we have House Republicans refusing to even come back here to DC to do their jobs until next week. Right now, we have Senate Republicans replaying a failed vote.

Look, if Republicans want to avoid a shutdown like Democrats want to avoid a shutdown, then stop spending so much time saying you will sit down with us on healthcare later. Spend that time working with us right now. But if Republicans insist on writing a bill without any Democrats, they better pass it without Democrats, too, because I am a no.

Democrats will continue to work to keep government open and to save your healthcare. I am ready to keep the government open, as I said many times over the last several weeks, and I am ready and I am willing to stay at the table for as long as it takes. The question here remains, will Republican leadership get serious and negotiate?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS AND OTHER MATTERS ACT, 2026

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to the motion to reconsider the vote on passage of S. 2882.

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

The motion was agreed to.

VOTE ON MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote on passage of S. 2882.

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

VOTE ON S. 2882, UPON RECONSIDERATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Shall the bill pass, upon reconsideration?

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 47, nays 53, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 534 Leg.]

YEAS—47

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

NAYS—53

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 47, the nays are 53.

The 60-vote threshold having not been achieved, the motion upon reconsideration did not pass.

The bill (S. 2882) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

H.R. 5371

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in a few minutes, the Senate is going to vote on the Republican partisan, status quo bill—partisan, status quo bill. The Republican CR was the wrong option for America a week ago. It remains the wrong option today because it does nothing—absolutely nothing—to solve the biggest healthcare crisis in America.

As we speak, tens of millions of Americans are getting letters in the mail informing them that their healthcare premiums are about to shoot up by an average of 114 percent. For a working-class family that needs healthcare, this is a huge increase. It is going to dramatically hurt them. And our Republican colleagues want to do nothing about it.

Four million people are about to lose coverage, and 24 million people will see their healthcare costs go up. And even if you don't have ACA, the insurers are going to raise rates on you because they are getting so much less money because of all the cuts my colleagues made.

This is a crisis.

Now I know the leader is going to show a poll that says that Democrats will be blamed for the shutdown. There are many more polls that show Republicans are blamed. The question in that poll is biased—biased—in the New York Times, but it is biased.

That is true. I don't always believe the New York Times; you can be sure of that. Neither do you. OK?