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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, October 17, 2025, at 2 p.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2025

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Merciful God, enthroned far above all other earthly powers, help us to put our complete trust in You.

Mighty God, You have the whole world in Your hands. As we wrestle with the gridlock of this government shutdown, inspire our lawmakers to do what is best for our Nation and world. Remind them that Your power is far above any conceivable command, authority, or control.

Lord, help them to appreciate their accountability to You as You guide them to contribute to unity and finding common ground. Be near to those who are the collateral damage of this impasse, supporting them with Your wisdom, power, mercy, and grace.

We pray in Your powerful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MULLIN). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS ACT, 2026—Motion to Proceed

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 168, H.R. 5371. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 168, H.R. 5371, making continuing appropriations and extensions for fiscal year 2026, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, we Senators disagree on a lot of issues in this body. However, there is one topic that we should all agree on, and that is the effectiveness of the National Human Trafficking Hotline.

Recently, the Department of Health and Human Services announced that they have awarded the contract to run

the hotline to a new contractor—very good news. The Trump administration moved on from the current contractor, Polaris.

On March 5 this year, I sent a letter to HHS. The letter makes public alarming whistleblower disclosures. These disclosures allege that Polaris failed to report tips of human trafficking, including child sex trafficking, to law enforcement.

On July 29 of this year, HHS sent me a letter confirming that Polaris had failed to report some tips to law enforcement.

For example, an audit of 294 cases was carried out. According to HHS, of the 294 cases, 4 trafficking cases weren't correctly reported because of clerical error, and in 24 trafficking cases, staff managing the hotline didn't follow reporting protocol.

That is nearly a 10-percent failure rate in a sample of 294 cases. Now, project that failure rate to the hotline receiving nearly 1.5 million tips.

So, as you can see, the Trump administration has thus far shown an aggressive commitment to fighting human trafficking.

This Senator will continue his oversight of the hotline and its new contractor to ensure that women and children who fall victim to these horrific acts have a way out.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, Democrats are dug in. Fifteen days into a government shutdown, Democrats show no sign that they are ready for it

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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to end. Not even the prospect of military families going without a paycheck was enough for Democrats to reopen the government. Nor are Democrats concerned about needy families uncertain about the future of nutrition assistance or Americans in flood zones who are unable to update their insurance or close on a home in the midst of hurricane season.

No, Democrats are dug in. And all those Americans living in uncertainty? Well, they are just going to have to wait until Democrats' far-left base is satisfied.

Democrats attempt to defend their funding blockade by complaining that Republicans won't negotiate. But what exactly is there to negotiate?

Negotiation happens when you have two sides, each with its own demands. Republicans have no demands. We have offered Democrats a clean, nonpartisan funding extension. Democrats, on the other hand, are insisting on \$1.5 trillion in new partisan spending in exchange for their votes.

Now think about that. Let's put this in perspective: \$1.5 trillion in new spending in their proposal to keep the government open for 4 weeks until the end of October.

Well, we are already at the middle of October. So, basically, they are saying they want \$1.5 trillion in taxpayer dollars to keep the government open for the next 2 weeks. Think about that one.

As our colleague from Louisiana put it, you need a spreadsheet to keep track of everything they are asking for. The truth is that what Democrats really want is something Republicans can't give them, and that is the approval of their far-left base.

They are looking for praise from the likes of moveon.org and Indivisible. This weekend, Indivisible is holding rallies around the country, and Democrats' motivations are laid bare by what one of the leaders of that far-left group told CNN last week.

He said:

I'm telling every elected I talk to: millions will be out cheering you on, or they'll be calling for new leadership.

"Cheering you on or calling for new leadership"—that is Democrats' motivation, pleasing their far-left base and preserving their political careers.

Meanwhile, we are reading stories about military families lining up at food banks, flight delays because of understaffed airport towers, needy families uncertain about the food assistance they depend upon.

But our Democrat colleague from Rhode Island says: For "Democrats, it's so far, so good."

"So far so good"—I doubt military families and Federal workers would agree.

If there was ever anything to make it clear that Democrats are in this for their own political advantage, it is callous comments like this one or the Democrat leader's statement that "every day gets better" for Senate Democrats.

While Democrats may be basking in praise from their far-left base, polls show that most Americans want this shutdown to end. Two-thirds of voters think Democrats should reopen the government, rather than hold out for their partisan demands.

And if just five more Democrats would show some courage, we could do just that. We need five more Democrats to say, "Enough is enough," to put the American people ahead of the far-left, and to support this clean, nonpartisan continuing resolution sitting right there at the Senate desk, ready to be picked up and passed today, put on the President's desk, signed into law, and the government reopens.

If just five more Democrats would show some courage, we could do just that. With five more votes, this bill could be on its way to the White House. As I said, President Trump stands ready to sign it. It is clean. It is nonpartisan. It has no policy riders, no partisan gimmicks. It simply funds the government for a foreseeable time, until November 21, to give us an opportunity to finish the appropriations process under regular order and to deal with the funding of the government in the way that it should be funded—in an open, transparent process that uses the committees under regular order, the Appropriations Committee, the subcommittees, and the floor open to amendments.

Again, I know that is a novel concept—that is a novel concept—compared to the way the Democrats did it when they had the majority. Even though the Appropriations Committee did its work last year and 11 of the 12 appropriations bills were reported out, not a single one was brought to the floor of the Senate because they like to negotiate behind closed doors, with a handful of people deciding on behalf of everybody else.

That is not the way this place ought to work.

Troops need to get paid. Families need to get the help they need. All the uncertainty for the American people needs to go away, and we can get back to work on the things that really matter.

But the question is, Are Democrats interested in that or are they more interested in being cheered by far-left groups at Saturday's rally?

Well, I guess we will see soon enough.

Will today be day 15 of the Democrats' shutdown?

We will have another opportunity, later today, to vote on that bill sitting right at the desk. Five more Democrats, it passes, goes to the White House, gets signed into law by the President, and the government opens up.

Will today be day 15 of Democrats' shutdown, or will it be the day we reopen the government and get back to the business of serving the American people?

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, it has now been over 2 weeks since Republicans shut the government down because they refuse to work with Democrats in a serious way to fix the healthcare crisis looming over the American people. Open enrollment starts in just 2 weeks, and Americans will be forced to choose healthcare plans that will send costs skyrocketing.

As we speak, families are receiving letters for their new health insurance rates, and more States—more States—are opening their window-shopping period for what health insurance will look like next year.

With open enrollment around the corner, Republicans cannot continue to kick this can down the road. It is happening now. The healthcare crisis is now. The public agrees. Democrats agree. The White House privately admits it.

Even some Republicans in Congress know it is the truth, and yet Republican leaders, especially Speaker JOHNSON, continue to dig in.

The Speaker has now kept the House Republicans on vacation for 3 weeks, as if they can make the issue go away by letting House Republicans hide. Well, the American people don't have time for Republican inaction.

This morning, let me show my Republican colleagues precisely what will happen if they continue to insist on "no negotiation."

Let's take a look at this chart. These are real numbers. These are the actual numbers for New York's healthcare exchange for the average couple in Plattsburgh, NY.

This is in the heart of New York's rural North Country, and it is Congresswoman ELISE STEFANIK's district. Right now, with the ACA tax credits, this healthcare plan, a bronze plan, is \$282 a month. That is still a lot for a family, a working family. It is a lot of money. It ends up, you know, coming close to \$4,000—\$3,500 a year. But that is nothing compared to what will happen if these credits expire.

If the tax credits expire, the same healthcare plan will go up to nearly \$1,700 a month next year—\$1,700. Mr. President, \$1,400 extra every single month—a 495-percent increase.

For the average family or small business owner or farmer in upstate rural New York, an extra \$1,400 a month on healthcare is financial ruin. That is \$15,000 a year. How are people—even people making decent money—going to afford that?

And this is not just true of New York. This is similar to what is happening in all the States around the country. Every day now, people are getting notices, and we are getting close to November 1, where people are going to have to decide: Do they give up health insurance altogether and watch their people, their children, their spouses suffer?

So I say to my Republican colleagues, especially in the House: You can't hide from your constituents forever. The American people expect Congress to fix this healthcare crisis, because otherwise people will go bankrupt; people will get sick; people will lose insurance; people will fail to get the care they need; and more people—more people—will needlessly die.

Republicans know this, and yet neither the Trump administration nor Republicans in Congress are even pretending to try and solve the healthcare crisis.

Democrats are ready and willing to negotiate with Republicans. We want to work in a serious way to reopen the government and spare tens of millions of Americans the threat of financial ruin—financial ruin—\$15,000 more or even more a year.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, last week, the Trump administration vindictively fired thousands of Federal workers in a mistaken attempt to try to hurt the Democrats in this shutdown.

Let's be very clear: Nobody forced the administration to do these firings. They did it because they wanted to, period. They did it on their own.

This decision, which they made—Trump made and his administration made, Vought—was so callous, so unnecessary, so deeply hurtful to hard-working Americans, and yesterday we learned it is even worse than they thought.

Yesterday, we learned that the administration admitted in court that nearly 800 employees in HHS were laid off in error. Not only are they mean and vicious and uncaring, they are incompetent. It is despicable. How careless, how incompetent is this administration? How cruel are they that they will throw away people's livelihoods like this with the flick of a pen without even examining what is happening?

These accidental firings show you how stupid it is for Russell Vought to treat Federal workers as political pawns. It is destructive; it is cruel; it is vicious, and it will backfire in the eyes of the public.

That is why even Republicans in Congress have urged the administration not to take vengeance out on Federal workers. The administration should reverse every single firing from last week and should stop playing politics with people's livelihoods and their lives.

They should instead get serious about negotiation with Congress to end this shutdown at once.

YOUNG REPUBLICANS CHAT GROUP

Mr. President, and finally on the Young Republicans, it is a frightening

time in America as we witness the rise of political violence and violent rhetoric.

Yesterday, as most people now know, Politico published a story about thousands upon thousands of text exchanges reported from prominent members of the Young Republican organization across the country, showing racist, sexist, outright violent language.

This wasn't a casual mention. This happened thousands and thousands and thousands of times from a group called the Young Republican organization. They made jokes about Hitler, about gas chambers. They talked about torture. They made jokes about sexual assault. They used almost every racist obscenity, including the N-word.

Now no matter who it comes from, right or left, all of us have an obligation to denounce vile rhetoric like this. But a full day after these texts have leaked, most Republican leaders haven't said a peep about these gas chamber and Hitler jokes coming from the Young Republicans.

Too many Republicans seem willing to call out violent rhetoric only when it comes from the other side. But these same Republicans never seem willing to denounce it when it comes from their own ranks, and that is dangerous. Violent political rhetoric is an attack on everyone.

And Vice President VANCE yesterday, amazingly, seemed to excuse these vile texts as just a college group chat and "refuse[d] to join the pearl clutching."

That is outrageous. Leave it to JD VANCE to preach about violent political rhetoric only when it serves his interests and then ignore or excuse it when it comes from his own side.

The hypocrisy is disgusting and shameful coming from supposed national leaders. If you don't like hate speech, you don't like all hate speech, not just hate speech from political groups you don't like. The real test is to denounce it from groups that might be on your side of the aisle, the Young Republican organization.

And let's be clear: These aren't random college kids. These are individuals who work in government, who have held positions of leadership at the State level, and one person in the chat is actually an elected official. Of course, some Republicans at the lower level have spoken out, and good for them; they should do so. But where is everyone else? Where are all our Republican colleagues? Where is President Trump?

Here is what needs to happen: Every single Republican leader from the President on down has to condemn these attacks immediately or all their cries about hate speech seem to be one-sided or bogus.

The people who made these vile comments should be out of a job and never allowed to work in politics again. And both sides must make it clear to the entire country that vile rhetoric like this is unacceptable.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, today is day 15 of the Schumer shutdown. Here we are, over 2 weeks into this, and the Democrats continue to play a dangerous game. The Schumer shutdown continues to put lives at risk, and it is doing it each and every day.

Every day an airplane takes off and lands, there is increased risk because of the Schumer shutdown. Thousands of air traffic controllers across the country keep us safe. Right now, they are working, but they are not getting paid. Yesterday, they received a partial paycheck, and it was their final paycheck until Democrats end the Schumer shutdown.

It is not just air traffic controllers. It is TSA agents. It is Border Patrol agents. It is ICE agents. It is FBI agents. They have also received their final paychecks. These are the people that we expect to make life-and-death decisions, and they shouldn't be distracted by financial matters that are affecting them as a result of the action by the Democrats in this body.

As of today, there is one bank that I want to refer to that serves members of the military. They serve Federal workers. They serve their families. They say that during the Schumer shutdown, 70,000 members have come asking for loans. That is 70,000 families of military and Federal workers who need extra help to make ends meet because Democrats have blocked their paychecks.

A recent headline from the Wall Street Journal reads "Furloughed Federal Workers Turn to Side Hustles to Survive Shutdown." People with full-time government jobs are desperate for the actual income that is necessary because their regular paychecks are being withheld by the Democrats. These are workers who are struggling to make ends meet, and they are not going to see another dime until SCHUMER and the Democrats end this shutdown.

These people, when they go to work—life-or-death decisions—need clear heads and clear minds to do their jobs. They shouldn't have to worry about the distractions of putting food on the table and keeping the lights on because the government is shut down. They shouldn't have distractions; they should be focused on their job when they are at work, not having to be worried about what is going on at home because the paychecks haven't come because the Democrats have stopped the flow of their paychecks.

One air traffic controller was very blunt about this and the consequences of the Schumer shutdown. He said:

The financial anxiety doesn't just hurt morale; it directly affects safety.

This is an air traffic controller.

Sometimes that small moment where your mind is elsewhere can have serious impacts.

That is what we are dealing with today. This is the seriousness that the Nation is facing while the Democrats and CHUCK SCHUMER play political games, and it is a dangerous game.

Let me tell you what is going on at airports across the country because air traffic controllers aren't getting paid thanks to CHUCK SCHUMER and the Democrats.

In Burbank, CA, the air traffic control tower was unmanned for 6 hours. Flights were grounded.

In Nashville, similarly, hundreds of flights were delayed in 1 day because the air traffic control tower went dark.

In Charlotte, nearly 2,000 flights have been delayed since the start of the Schumer shutdown.

Airport after airport.

In Atlanta, the Nation's busiest airport, air traffic controller staffing challenges and delays are mounting with each passing day.

More than 53,000 flights have been delayed nationwide because of the Schumer shutdown.

Most air traffic controllers live paycheck to paycheck, as do most Americans. Senate Democrats expect them to work for free. Why? Because the minority leader says: "Every day gets better for us." The Democrats say that every day gets better for them. Better for whom? Not better for the American people, whose lives are put in danger as a result of what the Democrats are here doing despite the needs of the Nation.

CNN recently published a shocking quote from a Democrat staff member. Maybe it is a member who is sitting on the floor right now in the U.S. Senate. A Democrat staff member said this, published by CNN. A staff member, a Democrat, said that the Democrats aren't going to change course with the Schumer shutdown strategy until "planes [are] falling out of the sky." That is the approach of the Democrat staff to the Democrat Senate, that they are not going to end the shutdown until there are "planes falling out of the sky."

Mr. President, is that where we are now because of what the Democrats are doing to this country? The shutdown doesn't end until planes are falling out of the sky.

Today's Democrat party has completely surrendered to the radical left. They have abandoned the American workers, the American people, American families. Those workers and families want to keep America safe. The safety of the American people has now become a punch line for the Democrat party in this Nation.

The far left is controlling today's Democrat party—make no doubt about it. These people are radical, extreme, dangerous, and scary, and they are coming to Washington this weekend. And they have told us how dangerous they are by admitting that their shutdown strategy will not change until planes are falling out of the sky.

Innocent people are collateral damage in this dangerous political game the Democrats are playing.

Democrats will have their ninth opportunity today to reopen the government. They will have their ninth opportunity to vote for a bipartisan, clean continuing resolution—a clean continuing resolution that they voted in favor of 13 times when Joe Biden was President.

Democrats are going to have their ninth opportunity to pay the brave men and women who keep our skies clear and who keep our borders secure and keep our communities safe.

Democrats have an obligation to reopen the government, and they need to do it before there are planes falling out of the sky.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the Republican Party controls the Presidency, the Senate, and the House of Representatives. Despite that trifecta, the government has been shut down for 15 long days and counting.

As Americans suffer, Majority Leader THUNE and Speaker MIKE JOHNSON insist that congressional Republicans will address expiring Affordable Care Act health insurance premium tax credits after the government reopens. But do the American people have any reason to believe that congressional Republicans really are going to work to help save healthcare for millions of Americans? Not if you look at the record.

In the past 8 months, Democrats have repeatedly tried to extend these ACA premium tax credits. What does it boil down to? Health insurance is expensive. For some families, it is too expensive. We created a program to provide tax credits for many families who otherwise couldn't have a good health insurance policy.

The Republicans, in the big, beautiful, blue budget—whatever they call it—ended up basically eliminating these tax credits, which means the burden will fall on these families, without any help in the Tax Code, in a matter of weeks.

In the past 8 months, we have tried to extend these tax credits, which were eliminated in the Trump big, beautiful budget.

In February, Senator SHAHEEN of New Hampshire offered an amendment to the first budget resolution to protect these tax credits. Senate Republicans voted against it, and the amendment failed.

In April, Senator SHAHEEN went again and offered another amendment to the second budget resolution doing exactly the same thing. Once again, the Republicans had a chance to correct the error they made in this big, beautiful budget, but they voted against it.

In June, Senator JON OSSOFF from Georgia offered an amendment to the Republicans' One Big Beautiful Bill to save the enhanced premium tax credits a third time. You know what happened. You can guess it. Every Senate Repub-

lican voted against the amendment. It failed.

Let us not forget that for the past 15 years, the American people have been waiting for the Republican Party's Affordable Care Act replacement plan.

In Donald Trump's first term, he made an attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act. He wouldn't describe to the American people what he was going to replace it with, but he was damned determined to get it repealed.

It led to a moment I will never forget on the floor of the Senate. It was about 2 or 3 in the morning. All the Members were in their seats. It came down to one person as to whether or not the Affordable Care Act would be repealed under the Trump administration, in his first term. It was a moment of high drama because we knew what was at stake: Millions of American families, without the help of the Affordable Care Act, couldn't buy or afford health insurance.

So it came down to the vote of John McCain—former Senator, Republican from Arizona. He went through those doors to my right and was gone for a few minutes. People said: He is talking to President Trump. Trump is trying to convince him to put an end to ObamaCare and the Affordable Care Act once and for all.

John McCain was his own man. He wasn't a creature of membership in an organization. He voted his conscience.

He walked through that door. A hush fell over the Chamber. He stood in the well right on the corner of that table and lifted his right arm as far as he could—remember, his arm was broken many times when he was a prisoner of war—and came down hard with a "no." With that single vote, John McCain saved the Affordable Care Act for millions of Americans and gave them health insurance they can afford for their families. The Republicans had failed again to put an end to the Affordable Care Act.

Well, here they are doing the same thing with the big, beautiful budget bill. And what does it mean for families? CHUCK SCHUMER was on the floor earlier this morning talking about the impact on the premiums.

Each State has a target date when the health insurance industry is going to announce the new premiums for the new calendar year, which starts in just a few weeks.

Our date in Illinois is October 27—12 days from today. Those who are part of healthcare.gov, those who are part of the Affordable Care Act will find out what happens to their premiums.

If history is an indicator, it shows that my Republican colleagues have no plan. They didn't have one in Trump's first term; they certainly don't have one now.

The President said, when he was asked point blank "What is your plan to replace ObamaCare?" he had concepts of a plan in his mind—nothing in writing—to make healthcare more affordable for the American people.

So it is a bit over the top for the Republicans to ask Democrats and the American people to wait and trust them to fix this issue, to let the premiums go up, and then maybe they will get around to changing the law.

That is what this is all about. There are a lot of words used on the floor of the Senate to describe the government shutdown. I am sorry it has reached this point, but I think there is a reason for it, and it is a good one. We believe that 20 million American families will see the cost of health insurance go up because of the Trump budget and reach a point where it is not affordable for many families to have health insurance. How about that?

What about your family? If you are a person who has health insurance, children, perhaps someone in your family with a serious illness, you understand the value of health insurance, and you understand your vulnerability. One broken bone, one automobile accident, one bad diagnosis, and you are going to end up with a bill you cannot pay. It will exhaust your savings. That is the reality of the cost of health insurance.

My Republican colleagues, like the one who just spoke, don't seem to understand that, and I think he should. What is at stake here is not a political custom match. What is at stake here is a decision by this body to help millions of American families. If Republicans in Congress fail to extend the enhanced premium tax credits before the end of this year—and that is just a few weeks away—premiums for 22 million Americans will double. Take a look at what you are paying each month for health insurance for your family, multiply times two, and that is the result of the Big Beautiful Bill that was passed by the Republicans.

Let me give you an example: In Illinois, a 60-year-old couple with an income of \$82,000 could see their annual premiums increase \$17,000 a year if the enhanced premium tax credits are not extended. That is an increase of \$1,400 a month. Ask any family, working family, whether paying \$1,400 a month more for health insurance will have an impact on the family budget. You know the answer.

Now, compare that additional cost of the tax cuts that some billionaires will enjoy because of this so-called Big Beautiful Bill that was passed by the Republicans. Billionaires will receive a tax cut of more than \$310,000 a year. I am sure Elon Musk needs that money—\$25,000 a month in tax breaks. Contrast those two numbers, an increase in health insurance premiums of \$1,400 a month because of the Republicans' vote and an increase in the tax breaks, the reduction of taxes for billionaires in America of \$25,000 a month. That includes more than 100,000 people in my home State of Illinois who will be forced to make the impossible decision that most Americans pray they will never have to make, like whether to purchase groceries or insulin or whether to pay the mortgage or take the kids in for their checkup.

Don't take my word for it. Listen to what my constituents have written to me. Stephanie from Evanston, IL, is a business owner. And many business owners count on health.gov for their health insurance. Stephanie told me if her enhanced ACA tax credits are allowed to expire, the result of the Big Beautiful Bill with the Trump budget would "cripple" her budget and that she is "not sure [she] could cover the doubling of this cost."

Most people wouldn't be able to. She asked me how "our country claims to support business owners if [they] can't afford to take care of their family's health?" More than 4 million other small business owners who get their health coverage through the Affordable Care Act are asking the same question.

Take Jennifer, she is a mother and a small business owner from Illinois who told me her costs have skyrocketed under this President. She told me her food costs are up and "utilities are up, gas is . . . expensive, [and] the costs of supplies for my business have tripled."

Jennifer is concerned her ACA premiums will double next year unless we do something.

That is what the shutdown is all about. It is not some source of pride for politicians to argue back and forth. There is a purpose in this debate. The purpose is to make sure we come to the rescue of tens of millions of Americans who face the doubling of their health insurance premiums. Jennifer is concerned her ACA premiums will double, as I mentioned, next year. If that happens, she would have "no choice but to pass those costs on to my customers or to close my doors."

As you know, small businesses employ almost 50 percent of private sector workers. They are the engine of our economy. If our Nation's small businesses start closing, there will be a ripple effect throughout our local economy, and it will happen, in part, because Republicans in Congress refuse to lower healthcare costs.

I like JOHN THUNE. He is the Republican leader here in the Senate. We have known one another for years. We have our differences politically, but I think he is basically a good person. I heard him come to the floor over and over again saying pass this clean continuing resolution, open the government, and, by golly, we are going to sit down and talk to you about health insurance.

Why can't we do that now? Why can't we do that this morning? There are enough tables in this building for people to gather. Now that the House of Representatives is back in town, they can participate as well. We need the President at the table, as well, as far as I am concerned. There are many Republicans who basically will wait for a signal from the President to agree to anything. Bring him to the table. He brought a cease-fire to the Middle East. Let's see if he can bring a cease-fire to the Senate and House.

It is past time to address this issue. Insurance companies are making their

final decisions about monthly premium costs for next year right now. They sent out notifications, and people will soon be picking their healthcare plans based on these costs. As I mentioned, October 27 is the target date for this announcement in Illinois. I guarantee you, if we don't bring some relief to these families, we are going to see premiums increase dramatically.

That is what this government shutdown is all about. We want to sit down and deal with healthcare costs directly and now. Leader THUNE and Speaker JOHNSON seem to have made the political calculation, when it comes to tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires, they have no problem moving fast and breaking things. But when it comes to healthcare for more than 24 million Americans, that can wait. My constituents, like Stephanie and Jennifer and their families, can't wait any longer. It is time to get this done.

One last point: I am from Downstate Illinois. I live in Springfield, 200 miles south of Chicago. I am honored to represent the city of Chicago. I, basically, do my best to represent the entire State. We have problems downstate because of these healthcare costs as well. Nearly 400,000 Illinoisans currently receive the ACA tax credits, which are at risk of disappearing because of the Republican vote. If the tax credits are not extended, eligible enrollees will pay an average of \$1,032 more per year in Illinois for healthcare coverage, \$1,700 more per year in rural areas. Smalltown, rural Illinois is going to feel this as well.

These increases will be higher for families. A 60-year-old couple earning \$82,000 a year would see an annual increase of \$17,000, \$1,400 a month. A family of four earning \$64,000 a year in Downstate Illinois would see an annual premium increase of 226 percent, \$2,571. Counties that will be hardest hit financially are conservative, Republican-dominated counties, by and large. Hamilton County will see an increase of \$2,772 a year; White County, \$2,496 more a year; Union County \$2,400 more a year. Counties with the highest number of enrollees impacted: Cook County, our largest, 170,500; DuPage County, 35,900; Lake County, 23,200. We estimate we will lose up to nine hospitals in Downstate Illinois because of changes in Medicaid and because of these increases in health insurance premiums. Is that of concern? It is to me. I represented these Downstate Illinois counties for many years.

I know what it means to lose a hospital. I know what it means to add 45 minutes to an hour to your drive time for the delivery of that baby or critical traumatic care. It really makes the difference between life and death. That is what we are fighting for.

Before the Sun sets today, let us hope that at some table here in the U.S. Capitol, the leaders of Congress will meet, and the President will promise to join them in an effort to get this solved. There is no reason we can't do

it. We hear from the Republicans that they want to make some changes. Let's make those changes now and make sure we get this done quickly.

I yield the floor.

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

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, it has been 15 days since congressional Democrats shut down the Federal Government. Let's call it what it is: It is the Schumer shutdown.

In that period, we have voted eight times on a clean continuing resolution. It is straightforward. It is a short-term bill that funds government at current levels without adding any kind of partisan policies to it. This would give us, here in Congress, time to finish the full-year funding bills responsibly.

Instead, Democrats pushed for over a trillion dollars in new spending to recklessly eliminate the \$50 billion rural hospital stabilization fund. Why in the world would Democrats want to do that? Why would they want to eliminate this crucial fund for our Nation's rural hospitals? It is unthinkable.

The fact is, the Democrats' so-called proposal to reopen the government is packed with unrelated items. This includes the COVID-era bonus payments, overseas climate resilience projects, and taxpayer-funded healthcare for noncitizens. That is not responsible governing, and it is not fair to American families.

House Republicans passed and they sent to the Senate a clean CR. That means that it has no poison pills, no policy riders on it. Democrats rejected it eight times. It is now time, folks, for Senator SCHUMER and his caucus to drop this partisan wish list and do their jobs.

Meanwhile, it was reported in Punchbowl News on October 9 that CHUCK SCHUMER said:

Every day gets better for us.

And by "us," he means the Democrat party.

If the Democrats think it is better that our troops aren't paid and that it is better when people are worried about being furloughed, then that just shows their arrogance. That just shows that they are tone-deaf to the uncertainty and the stress people are feeling. That just shows CHUCK SCHUMER is in his Schumer shutdown only for political theater.

This shutdown is hurting people. Farmers are losing access to Federal support at a time when the ag economy is already strained. Construction projects that rely on Federal funding are stalling. Air traffic controllers and Federal employees face uncertainty about their paychecks. None of this—none of this—is necessary.

Let's be clear. A short-term funding bill is not the place for sweeping policy changes. If this continues, deeper cuts to essential services may follow, and that is entirely preventable.

Remember, the House sent us a clean CR, with no new policies included. It

simply continues current funding until November 21. Then we will take up appropriations bills that have strong bipartisan support. And they have that because it was already negotiated within that Appropriations Committee and, as a member of that committee, we passed it out of the committee.

I am deeply committed to that transparent process—one where Senators debate, amend, and vote on each bill individually before the end of the fiscal year.

All we are asking is to reopen the government so that we can continue that funding process. Leader Thune promised that we would take appropriations bills up, here on the floor, and we have already passed three of them. Let's show the American people bipartisanship and transparency and continue this important work.

So why are we here today and still shut down? Because the Democrats are more focused on appeasing the far left than funding the government. I believe they are caving to political pressure when they should be fulfilling their most basic duty: keeping the government open and operating for their constituents.

Republicans' goal is simple: Reopen the government now, protect our military and families, and return to regular order.

At the end of the day, Americans deserve a functioning government, not political theater. If just a handful of Senate Democrats join Republicans, we can end this shutdown. And I hope when we next vote to reopen the government, my Democrat colleagues will join us in doing the right thing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to highlight a growing crisis that threatens our farmers, rural communities, food security, and our national economy. I am concerned that as American agriculture and rural communities face very hard times, many Americans are unaware of the stakes ahead.

Here is the bottom line. American agriculture is in serious trouble, and Congress must act now with short-term assistance.

That is not hyperbole. I continue to hear from producers in Mississippi and across the country that the numbers don't add up and the outlook is grim. Without immediate action, we risk losing not only farms but also the rural communities and the food security they provide. This is no longer a warning; it is an emergency.

Over the past three crop years, rising input costs for seed, fertilizer, fuel, labor, and more have collided with falling commodity prices and high interest rates. Even with strong crop yields this year, many farmers are facing losing between \$100 and \$400 per acre. For a 2,000-acre farm, that is a financial hit in the hundreds of thousands and some-

times millions of dollars in losses. Farm bankruptcies have already surpassed last year's total, and if we do not step in, that trend will accelerate.

The ripple effect is real. In small towns across America, family farms are the economic engine. When farms thrive, so do local grocery stores, schools, equipment dealers, banks, and churches. When farms fail, the community fails with them. Jobs disappear. Families leave. Main Street goes silent.

We have seen this before. In the 1980s, a generation of farmers was nearly wiped out by high interest rates, collapsing markets, and inadequate safety nets. Today's producers are starting to feel those same pressures. Bankers, economists, and lenders are sounding the alarm again.

While we may differ on policy, we must agree on the urgent need to act while we still have time to do that. The significant updates we secured in the reconciliation process this summer will strengthen the farm safety net, and I am proud of that progress. But those changes won't take effect until next fall. That is too late for many farmers already on the brink. We need short-term assistance now to help producers survive the coming crop year.

Let me be crystal clear: Farmers do not want a handout; they want a fair shot.

Food security is national security. We cannot afford to lose a generation of American farmers or become dependent on foreign countries to feed and clothe us. That is a risk that we cannot take.

Over the long term, we know American agriculture will be stronger if we secure fairer trade deals and build stable markets at home and abroad.

Our competitors—China, Argentina, Brazil, and others—are moving aggressively. I believe that if we don't act quickly, we will lose vital export opportunities and long-term stability for our producers.

In this world of global competition, we must revive American-grown cotton to be the center of our supply chains, providing reliable markets for our producers and bolstering industries that depend on cotton.

I introduced the Buying American Cotton Act to help us get there by incentivizing U.S. retailers to produce, purchase, and manufacture American cotton here at home. This legislation would help secure a resilient, self-reliant, and prosperous cotton industry for the future by reinforcing our supply chain—from farm to textile, to market—and by reducing our reliance on cotton produced under forced labor practices and environmental destruction.

I call on this body to consider this legislation as we seek long-term solutions to the problems that beset American farmers today.

I am encouraged by the bipartisan work underway to complete a 5-year reauthorization of the farm bill, which is long overdue.

Last winter, we secured farm support funding, which was a lifeline for many of our farmers this crop year, but the crisis hasn't passed. Farmers are still facing impossible choices about whether they can afford to plant next year or even to stay in business at all. I fully support ongoing work to provide additional Federal bridge funding before the end of the year to ensure more of our family farms can stay in business.

We all represent different sectors of American agriculture, but the crisis does not discriminate. It spans commodities, regions, and party lines. What matters now is that we come together with urgency and with purpose.

Our farmers are counting on us. It is time for Congress to meet the moment before it is too late.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

ISRAEL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, after more than 2 years of bloodshed, 20 living hostages and the remains of at least 7 deceased hostages were recently returned to their families in Israel by Hamas. Videos of the tearful reunions circulating on social media showed the immense joy and relief felt by the families, who have been suffering through the unthinkable and wondering if they will ever see their loved ones again.

Behind all this extraordinary story is the leadership of President Trump in negotiating an end to this war that has lasted 2 years. President Trump has rightly gained praise from some of the most unexpected critics, like Kamala Harris, Hillary Clinton, and minority leader CHUCK SCHUMER. All of these people are correctly acknowledging what supporters of President Trump have known for a long time: He is truly a master of the art of the deal. I can't think of a single President who, through a combination of carrots and sticks, could have accomplished something like this before, but President Trump has, and he deserves the credit.

But, of course, for this conflict to be truly over, each and every one of the conditions laid out in President Trump's 20-point peace deal must be implemented by both sides, and that is where the trouble really begins.

We cannot allow a terrorist organization like Hamas to pull the wool over our eyes or to act like this is any normal sort of negotiation between two parties acting in good faith. Hamas must keep up its end of the bargain on this and other terms for the deal to actually work.

We have already seen how Hamas has violated the peace agreement, as they have not yet returned the remaining bodies of 20 additional hostages who are presumed dead, including 2 American citizens, so that their families can properly grieve and bury their loved ones.

Yesterday, Hamas, despite this peace deal, violently sought to reassert its control over Gaza from rival Palestinian groups. This included Hamas dragging several men from their fami-

lies and executing them in broad daylight.

Hamas has been rightfully described as a death cult. Their blatant disregard for human life is the reason the Palestinian people have undergone so much suffering over the last 2 years in Gaza. I know some would like to blame Israel and the Israeli Defense Forces and Prime Minister Netanyahu, but the reason for the humanitarian disaster that has been Gaza for the last 2 years is because of Hamas. If they hadn't executed 1,200 or so Israeli citizens on October 7, 2 years ago, none of this would have occurred.

Of course, establishing an agreement that depends on the good will of Hamas is going to be an enormous challenge, and it can't be a matter of faith that they will act as any negotiating partner in good faith would be presumed to act.

Over the last 24 hours, the importance of establishing a multinational security force in Gaza to replace Hamas has become increasingly clear. Hamas cannot remain in control if we are to have peace. But the return of the 20 living hostages is no small feat, and it is something to be celebrated.

If President Trump is successful in ultimately bringing a lasting peace to the region, it will be one of the most significant diplomatic and foreign policy accomplishments in memory.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, on another matter, it has now been 15 days since Senate Democrats have shut down the Federal Government. They did that by blocking a short-term spending provision that would have taken us up until November 21—in other words, roughly 9 weeks from the beginning of the continuing resolution.

Republicans have given Democrats multiple opportunities to end this mess by holding a number of votes on the House-passed continuing resolution.

As majority leader Senator THUNE has pointed out numerous times, we are not asking for any major policy changes. All we are asking is to keep the lights on and to keep Federal Government employees paid during this period of time while we work out longer term appropriations bills by the November 21 deadline. But every single time we have given Democrats the opportunity to do the right thing, only three of them have voted to reopen the government.

You know, talking to my constituents back home, it is hard to explain what is going on here. They understand the stupidity of a government shutdown. Experience has shown that the same problems that cause a shutdown in the first place are there staring you in the face when the government is reopened, so it accomplishes nothing except maybe as performance art. If you think about it, that is really what this is.

Our Democratic colleagues are afraid to act in a reasonable and logical manner and keep the government open

while we negotiate longer term appropriations bills and take up the issue of healthcare subsidies that expire at the end of this calendar year. In a normal world, that is what we would be doing now, but we can't do any of that during a government shutdown.

Federal employees are now beginning to miss their paychecks, which will have consequences that reverberate throughout the country. One in six Americans lives paycheck to paycheck. So it may not be a big deal to wealthy Senators on the Democratic side who don't have to worry about paying the bills paycheck to paycheck, but it does matter to many, many Americans because it means they may not be able to pay their rent or they may not be able to buy groceries for their family or pay their utility bills because they are not receiving a paycheck.

Some people may be thinking, well, it is only government employees that are going to be affected, and everybody knows the Federal Government is big and bloated and could stand a diet.

But it is not simply the case that these government employees will be the only ones affected. There are going to be a number of downstream effects of this Democrat-induced shutdown that have consequences for everybody.

First of all, I have to tell you, it is embarrassing. It is embarrassing that the greatest country in the world and the people who are elected to represent 330 million Americans can't get their act together and can't figure this out. It is beyond dumb. It makes no sense at all except as a matter of self-serving political gesturing and the sort of performance art that I mentioned a moment ago—trying to demonstrate to your political base: Yeah, we are fighting.

Well, this isn't fighting. Fighting is keeping the government open, having debates, having votes, trying to persuade people to your point of view. That is what political fighting is. It is not taking your ball and going home.

One issue affecting the whole country, Federal workers and private sector employees alike, is the way this shutdown is disturbing airplane flights. My flight coming back from Austin this past week was delayed by such a disruption. It wasn't that big a deal to me, obviously, but I am sure I am not the only one who has experienced this. More important than the fact that Senators are experiencing it, our constituents—the people we represent, the people we owe our jobs to—they are the ones that are suffering inconvenience.

Transportation security agents and air traffic controllers are among the Federal workers deemed essential during a government shutdown, which means they have to work, but they are not being paid. That is a pretty difficult situation for many of these folks to be in. As I said, some of them can't afford childcare, to buy groceries, to pay the rent, to pay utilities. This is the true hardship for many of these Americans. This has resulted in many

of these essential employees calling in sick in order to pick up shift work to make ends meet. Additionally, those who are showing up are having to work under increased stress, longer hours, and shortstaffed working environments.

On top of this, they are carrying the burden of not knowing when they are ever going to get paid. Now, we know that under the law, these employees will eventually be reimbursed for their missed salary, but that doesn't do a lot to put food on the table right now or pay the rent or to pay utility bills now.

As the president of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association put it, "It's completely unfair that an air traffic controller"—the one who makes sure our airline flights are safe—"is the one that holds the burden of 'see how long you can hang in there in order to allow this political process to [work] out.'"

The president of a local chapter of the American Federation of Government Employees at Dallas-Fort Worth said regarding the shutdown:

There's a lot of uncertainty.[a] lot of questions coming from the field. They don't know how long this is gonna last.

I don't know how long it is going to last, either, but the problem is that it only gets worse the longer the shutdown goes on.

Just in terms of airline flights, we have seen hundreds canceled since the shutdown began, and thousands more have been delayed, which means more and more Americans' daily routines are being upended as a result of this irrational and truly stupid government shutdown.

Three airports in Texas are seeing some of the worst delays. Last Tuesday, both the George Bush Intercontinental Airport and Hobby Airport in Houston were at risk of ground stops because of staffing shortages. Love Field in Dallas was also experiencing delays.

But this isn't just affecting the State of Texas; airports around the country are experiencing delays in order to avoid dangerous potential air flights and ground activity associated with shortstaffing. The Federal Aviation Administration is also reporting staffing problems in Boston, Nashville, Chicago, and Philadelphia, as well as Burbank, CA; Newark, NJ; and Denver, CO. Some analysts have speculated that the disruptions could continue to cause problems during the upcoming travel holiday—Thanksgiving and into Christmas.

For many of us here in the Senate, it has become an unwelcome tradition each year to have our Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations with our families upset in order to perform our responsibilities. That doesn't just affect Members of the Senate and the House but also the able staff that make our work possible.

Of course, what this tradition is, is really a sign of dysfunction. It is embarrassing. It should be embarrassing.

If we did our jobs properly and passed our appropriations bills on time, we would not have to impose the burdens of all this on other people—our constituents and our staff.

It is really not rational that the Senate Democrats should impose this burden on the entire country in order to try to appease the more radical elements of their political base, which is really what this is all about. They are afraid to agree to something reasonable and rational and short term because they know that they are likely to be criticized by their political base, the more radical elements in the Democratic base.

Well, don't take my word for it. Minority Leader SCHUMER has made it clear that he is willing to impose almost any cost on ordinary Americans in order to try to appease his radical progressive base. In one of the more telling quotes, he admitted to *Punchbowl News*, last week, that this was all about politics, when he said:

Every day gets better for us.

Really? Well, by "us," he doesn't mean the American people. He must mean people like him who are afraid to say no to the radical base in order to perform the most basic functions of government. Plus the fact that it is not true—is every day really getting better? Or is it more and more embarrassing? Is it having more and more of a ripple effect on people who are innocent of any wrongdoing? They just happen to be affected.

I think if the Democratic leader were to ask the Transportation Security Administration workers who are working overtime without pay or the air traffic controllers who are wondering when, if ever, they will receive their next paycheck, who are also working without pay, or the mothers and fathers of the Federal employees who are wondering if they are able to enjoy the holidays with their children and their extended families because of travel disruption, or maybe just because financially they won't be able to make ends meet—but the truth is that Senate Democrats care less about the Federal workers and the rest of the country than they do about appeasing their radical base.

Senator SCHUMER has made it clear that it was his plan, all along, to make the American people pay the price in order to achieve his political goals when he said:

We've thought about this long in advance.

So this wasn't an accident. This wasn't sort of a surprising occurrence. This was planned, all along, by Senator SCHUMER, the Democratic leader, which makes it all that much more egregious.

Well, I sincerely hope, for the sake of Texans and Americans all across the country, that Senate Democrats will have a change of heart. I hope that, someday soon, maybe today, Senate Democrats will set aside the demands of their radical base and simply vote to put an end to this ridiculous government shutdown that serves no one's in-

terest except perhaps their own narrow political interest.

We need to pass that short-term continuing resolution that will only take us to November 21, and then, I imagine, we are going to have this discussion all over again, which is just further evidence of the dysfunction here in the Senate and in the Congress these days—mainly, because our Senate Democrats and House Democrats are so opposed to President Trump and his policies, and they feel like they need to be shown to fight and to push back against President Trump.

But they are not hurting President Trump. He is doing just fine. He is making incredible peace deals in the Middle East and, hopefully, in other places around the world, like Ukraine. What they are doing is hurting their own constituents, and they are causing people to doubt whether their government can actually function the way it is supposed to.

So I hope, given the opportunity to vote here shortly on another short-term continuing resolution, the stop-gap spending bill that will only take us to November 21, that we get five more Democrats joining the three who have already voted to reopen the government so that we can put an end to this foolishness, because every day does not get better for the American people, even if it gets better politically to save Senator SCHUMER's skin.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ISRAEL

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, at long last, our friends in Israel have won the war by defeating the depraved Hamas savages that launched the heinous, unprovoked attack from Gaza on October 7. After the most devastating assault on Jews since the Holocaust, which was followed by 2 years of fighting and suffering and death, the living hostages are home, and a new day has dawned in the Middle East.

Earlier this week, I joined my fellow Arkansans in rejoicing and thanking God for answering our prayers and bringing those hostages home to their families.

At the same time we celebrate their reunions, though, we also pledge that we will never forget the innocent deceased victims of Hamas's atrocities, many of whom have not yet been properly laid to rest. We will work to secure their remains and honor their memory through our commitment to a lasting and enduring peace in the Middle East.

When terrorists attacked, raped, maimed, and killed innocent Israelis

and Americans and citizens of other nations, on October 7, the Middle East was forever changed, but not in the way Hamas intended. Instead of pressuring Israel to surrender, President Trump rejected the Obama-Biden policy of appeasement and weakness, and we backed Israel to the hilt.

Because of President Trump's unrelenting pressure on Hamas and Prime Minister Netanyahu's decisive military action, Iran's terrorist ring of fire around Israel is now a ring of smoke—smoking ruins. We have crippled Iran's nuclear weapons program. We have weakened the Houthis. We have devastated Hezbollah, and we have destroyed Hamas's political and military leadership.

This graphic shows just some of the depraved savages who are now rotting in hell. If you have a chance to be Hamas's next leader, you might want to think twice. This is how we deliver "peace through strength."

Though good has once again triumphed over evil, we must keep the pressure on to compel Hamas to demilitarize once and for all. As President Trump said this week, "if they don't disarm, we will disarm them"—because let's be clear: There can be no lasting peace for Gaza with Hamas sitting at the table.

For those who say otherwise, consider that, as the rest of the world celebrates the return of the hostages and a cease-fire, Hamas terrorists have been publicly executing members of the opposition in Gaza in a last-ditch effort to hang on to their waning power. This is appalling, but not surprising, given Hamas's track record of using the people of Gaza as pawns to achieve its ultimate aim of eliminating Israel.

Time and again, we have seen Hamas use innocent people as human shields and weaponize humanitarian aid by withholding food and supplies from children. These are the sort of vile intimidation tactics that Hamas terrorists have used for decades to remain in power—no more.

Today, with our friends in Israel and the Arab world, we have the opportunity to chart a path toward peace and prosperity for the people of Gaza. And while today is a day for rejoicing, let it also serve as a reminder of one of history's timeless lessons: Bad things happen when you lose a war, especially when you started the war. These men can attest to that lesson.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, let me be clear: Shutdowns do not require Presidents to fire people en masse. They actually do not require Presidents to cancel projects and raise energy prices; nor do they give Presidents new magical powers to destroy programs they don't like or to target political opposition.

You don't have to take my word for it because this is not our first govern-

ment shutdown. It is just the first time that a President has blatantly and gleefully tried to use a shutdown against the American people.

So when President Trump fires hundreds of public health workers at CDC without thinking twice about if it would put lives in jeopardy, that is a choice he is making. When President Trump puts at risk special education programs through mass layoffs, that is a choice he is making to abandon students with disabilities and their families and weaken their access to rights under our special education laws. When Trump outright shuts a key community development fund, which has strong bipartisan support and finances housing and healthcare and other community projects in our country, that is a choice he is making.

President Trump is choosing to fire as many people as he thinks he can get away with to break as much of the government, as is possible, to hurt the American people as much as he can, because he thinks he can use regular people as leverage.

That is the cold, hard reality, and it is plain as day. That is why Trump is governing by a principle of maximum pain. It is not because he had to; it is because he wanted to. It is not because he is following any law; it is because he is ignoring countless laws. It is not because he held off on layoffs; it is because he is eager to continue to break our government, bend it to his will, and enrich himself in this process.

President Trump knows perfectly well—just as my Republican colleagues know—that shutdowns don't give him any new power, and they don't just let him fire people with reckless abandon. After all, Trump was President for the longest shutdown in American history. And guess what. Trump didn't have to fire thousands and thousands of workers when he caused that longest shutdown in history. He didn't get to run roughshod over our laws when he kept the government shut down for over a month. So don't let any Republican tell you he simply had to now.

And let me put another obvious falsehood to rest. Leader THUNE keeps saying Democrats are "enthralled to the radical left." But here is the thing: We actually are the ones talking to Republican voters, because the majority of Republicans—and the overwhelming majority of the American people—do not want to see their premiums double, triple, or even quadruple for millions of families.

And many Republicans are starting to realize that too. Look at MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE, who has made clear she thinks Republicans need to look at how to stop these premium hikes. Just look at the growing chorus of Republican Members begging Speaker JOHN-SON to bring them back so we can solve this issue.

Clearly, Republicans are feeling the heat. That is why we are suddenly hearing Republican leaders absurdly pretend they have always meant to

focus on healthcare, even if they would never talk about it before and even if the only thing they are saying right now is: No, no, no. We can't do anything on this right now. We can just think about it, possibly talk about it; potentially, maybe, do something someday. So House Republicans may not be here in DC to talk about this issue with Democrats, but here is the thing: They are still hearing about this back at home. Families are staring down massive premium hikes, and they want Republicans to return and finally work on solutions.

Look, the Republican leader can shut down the government if he is really that desperate to avoid addressing the healthcare crisis Republicans caused. He can shut down the debate, but he cannot shut down the voices of families who are speaking out about how their premiums are about to skyrocket.

I have been constantly hearing from folks back home in Washington State. Letters and calls are pouring into my office from families who are worried about how their premiums will double if Republicans refuse to act.

A woman called in to my office to share that her husband already received notices that their insurance is going to double in cost.

A mother whose son has a traumatic brain and spinal cord injury called. She is terrified that she has no idea how they are going to afford the care he needs if healthcare gets more expensive.

Last week, I spoke with a freelancer in Seattle who is worried that their monthly payments will increase—monthly—by \$1,300.

A video producer told me his premiums are going to more than double and be 60 percent of his mortgage payment.

The week before that, I spoke with some small business owners. They have no idea what they are going to do if these tax credits expire and their healthcare costs go up. Many of them are rethinking whether they can even afford to keep their small businesses or if they choose to just go for catastrophic coverage instead. One small business owner will see his premiums triple, his wife told me, and that is simply not affordable.

This is not just happening in Washington State; this healthcare crisis is about to hammer families across the country in red and blue States alike. In fact, the biggest rate increases are all in red States, and three-fourths of the people who rely on these tax credits are too.

Why don't Republicans go home and talk to their constituents? If the Republican leader doesn't want to sit down with Democrats to work on a solution, how about he sits down and listens to folk back home who are getting notices this month with massive price hikes for their health insurance?

If the Republican leader won't sit down with Democrats to save people from losing their healthcare coverage,

how about he sits down with small business owners since nearly half of the people on the marketplaces are small business owners, employees or self-employed.

If he won't sit down with Democrats to stop premiums from tripling for some families in his State, how about he sits down with farmers since over a quarter of farmers in this country are covered through the ACA changes?

Does Leader THUNE think farmers are now the radical left? Does he think small businesses are the radical left? Because that is who is about to get crushed by these higher premiums. That is who is watching this debate and hoping and praying for action.

It is unbelievable that the best the Republican leader can offer to families who are worried about their Affordable Care Act crisis is "wait." "Later." That is really out of touch with families and with reality. Rates are being set right now. Massive hikes are being announced right now. Open enrollment is in a few weeks.

In fact, by the way, Idaho's open enrollment starts today. Every single Senator needs to watch what is happening in Idaho today because folks in Idaho are in for a very rude awakening when they log in today and see the rates for the coming year. And that rude awakening is coming to the rest of the country on November 1 if Republicans keep refusing to act.

So every single Senator needs to listen to the families who speak out about these massive rate hikes that are becoming reality. I actually spoke to some Idahoans last week. One retiree told me about how her premiums are going to jump 173 percent. That is almost triple. If you think that is bad, another retiree I spoke with had learned that with the tax credits, his premium will be \$367 a month; without those tax credits, a whopping \$2,232 a month. That is astounding. Yet, if Republicans refuse to act, that is the reality that is going to come crashing down on families across our Nation.

This is not an end-of-the-year problem, like Speaker JOHNSON keeps saying; it is a right-now problem. There is a train coming. Families are tied to the tracks. Why on Earth would Republican leaders insist on standing by? Why are they twiddling their thumbs? Why do they want to wait until those rates are locked in? For all the talk of "later," why on Earth wouldn't Republican leaders work with us earlier on this?

This is not some surprise. We have been raising the alarm on this issue for months. Republican leaders just didn't care earlier, and apparently they still don't care now. What a contrast to Republicans' billionaire tax breaks just a few months ago. Republicans were full speed ahead when it came to shoveling money at some of the richest people on the planet. Remember that? They moved heaven and earth. They used magic math. They slashed over a trillion in healthcare for patients and hos-

pitals. They used every trick in the book for billionaires. But now, nothing when it comes to working families; nothing when it comes to healthcare.

Republicans can either go back home and explain to their own constituents why they think their premiums should double or they can come to the table, where Democrats have been this whole time, and work with us to reach a serious deal that reopens the government in response to this healthcare crisis. Democrats are not going anywhere. We are staying at the table.

Right now, Republican leadership is refusing to take the shutdown or the healthcare crisis seriously. Speaker JOHNSON is still refusing to bring his Members back from vacation despite the growing mutiny among Republicans. Leader THUNE is still refusing to do anything other than vote on the same failed partisan CR over and over. And President Trump is still creating a government shutdown like his own personal jamboree, tweeting out sombreros and promising to cut "Democratic programs."

Let's be clear. Republicans control the White House and both Chambers of Congress, and they are basically missing in action when it comes to finding a real solution to reopen the government and save millions of Americans from healthcare bills that will break the bank.

When will President Trump get serious about a solution? When will Speaker JOHNSON and Leader THUNE do their jobs and get to the negotiating table? When will House Republicans end this monthlong vacation? Today? Tomorrow? Next week? The American people are waiting.

But, of course, Republican leadership isn't the end all, be all because Republican voters have made clear they do not want to see their premiums skyrocket, and Republican Members of the House and Senate alike are hearing from those families back home who will not let them ignore this and starting to realize that we actually do need to address this healthcare issue now. But the clock is ticking. Rate hikes are going out in the mail. Open enrollment is starting today in Idaho. Time is running out, and that message is breaking through.

I think even Republican leaders are starting to realize there is no spinning their way out of premiums doubling in our country. If they want to get serious about stopping that and ending the shutdown, all they have to do is say so.

Mr. President, our doors are open.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to complete my remarks prior to the scheduled recess.

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

Ms. ROSEN. I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to display three charts simultaneously.

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

HAMAS

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, on October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorists shocked the human conscience when they carried out a brutal attack on Israel that murdered innocent men, women, children, babies; an attack during which terrorists raped innocent women; an assault during which Hamas took hundreds hostage, including Americans and Holocaust survivors.

For people everywhere and especially Jewish people, this brutal terrorist attack shook us all to our core. It shattered our hearts, and it led to our collective grief—a grief that has lasted for years as we awaited the day when these innocent hostages could be reunited with their families.

Since the aftermath of October 7, I have had these posters in the lobby of my office to remind every single person who walked through the doors that innocent people were still being brutally held by Hamas terrorists. These signs have been a reminder of who started this war and how it was kept going for so long.

For more than 2 years 739 agonizing days, families in Israel, in the United States, and around the world have lived every waking moment—every waking moment—in anguish, waiting, praying, advocating for the safe return of their loved ones taken hostage, again, by the terrorist organization that is Hamas. Those folks never stop; they never tire. They traveled across continents and oceans to make sure that the world would never forget their commitment to freeing their loved ones and that their voices would be heard and that their loved ones would be brought home. So their mission was not to stop speaking out until they were reunited with their loved ones.

I had the honor of meeting these families many times over the last couple of years both in Israel and here in the United States. I have had the honor of meeting mothers and fathers who showed me photos of their missing children, of meeting brothers and sisters who refused to give up hope, and even meeting survivors who escaped captivity and still found the courage to tell their stories when it wasn't pretty or easy, and they will spend the rest of their lives healing.

I have also met with families of innocent people who were taken hostage and murdered and whose bodies Hamas refused to return to their loved ones. I sat with them. I have listened to their gut-wrenching stories and cried with them and promised them that America and Congress would never turn away.

As a mother, as a wife, frankly, as a human being, I can understand their fight, their desire to be reunited with their loved ones and just how deep that pain is for them. That is why I worked with colleagues on both sides of the aisle and across two different administrations to continue shining that light on the need to return hostages to their families, to their communities.

This week, that day finally came. After many long, painful months of negotiations, a cease-fire deal has been reached—one that has resulted in the return of all the living hostages. This is a testament to the resilience and relentless work of families, allies, advocates who never stopped speaking out and standing up.

I am deeply grateful to the Trump administration for reaching a deal to make this day possible for these families.

This is a testament to what we can do, what can happen when we put politics aside and care for each other as human beings, when we have empathy for each other.

While we have been overjoyed to see the images of hostages being reunited with their loved ones—it has brought us to tears—let us not forget those who haven't been so lucky, because Hamas continues to hold the bodies of dead hostages, including Americans Itay Chen and Omer Neutra.

I met their families. I felt their pain. And we cannot forget them. We cannot forget these families—families who will never get to see their loved ones, families who never got to say goodbye, that one last “I love you” before a loved one went off to a music festival to enjoy an evening concert.

We must remain clear-eyed that our work is not over. The agreement is still in its early stages, and now is not the time to sit idly by.

I hope the Trump administration and my colleagues in Congress on both sides of the aisle continue to provide support and enforce guardrails to see this through. We must remain committed to ensuring the quick return of the deceased hostages to give their families, well, maybe some sense of closure that they need and they deserve.

We must make sure that Israel's security remains ironclad; that Hamas, terrorists—Hamas are terrorists, let's be clear—they can never again threaten innocent lives and that no terrorist organization should be using civilians as shields or bargaining chips. We should demand this much. No terrorist organization should ever use civilians as shields or bargaining chips, as we have seen.

At the same time, we must also act to ease the immense suffering of innocent Palestinians in Gaza. They need access to humanitarian aid, to food, to medicine, and the chance to rebuild their communities free from Hamas terrorist control and oppression.

Most of all, we must not let this fragile moment pass by without redoubling our commitment to peace, a lasting peace that ensures safety, dignity, and self-determination for both Israelis and Palestinians.

So, this week, as we mark this moment of long-awaited relief, let us remember, our work is not done, for peace is not achieved in a single day. It is built with strength and courage of those who refuse to give up on it, for

the hostages who survived, and for those who tragically did not, for the families who waited, for the families who advocated for the return of their loved ones, and for the people who continue to pray for a peaceful future.

May this step be the first sign of change as we move toward an end to violence, toward a future where Israeli and Palestinian children alike can grow up knowing not war but embracing hope, a hope for a peaceful tomorrow. It is my hope as well.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

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

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:33 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BANKS).

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS ACT, 2026—Motion to Proceed—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

VOTE ON MOTION

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I move to proceed to the motion to reconsider the cloture motion on the motion to proceed to H.R. 5371.

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

The motion was agreed to.

MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the cloture vote on the motion to proceed to H.R. 5371.

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

The motion was agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 168, H.R. 5371, a bill making continuing appropriations and extensions for fiscal year 2026, and for other purposes.

John Thune, Eric Schmitt, Jim Justice, James E. Risch, Tom Cotton, Steve Daines, Ted Budd, John R. Curtis, John Boozman, Mike Rounds, Kevin Cramer, Bernie Moreno, Ron Johnson, John Barrasso, Markwayne Mullin, James Lankford, Tim Sheehy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 5371, a bill making continuing appropriations and extensions for fiscal year 2026, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close, upon reconsideration?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL), and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted “yea” and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. HAGERTY) would have voted “yea.”

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 572 Leg.]

YEAS—51

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

NAYS—44

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

NOT VOTING—5

Blackburn	Hagerty	Tillis
Duckworth	Marshall	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 44.

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

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

CRYPTOCURRENCY

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, with me today is one of my colleagues from my office, Mr. Will Pietri, who has helped me immensely on this issue.

I want to talk, just for a few minutes, about digital assets. Some people refer to them as crypto or cryptocurrency.

The Senate Banking Committee is in the process, as we should be, of considering market structure legislation for digital assets, for Bitcoin, for crypto. And it is important because there is an enormous amount of confusion out there.