

NAYS—34

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Sanders
Baldwin	Hirono	Schatz
Bennet	Kim	Schumer
Blumenthal	Luján	Slotkin
Blunt Rochester	Markey	Smith
Booker	Merkley	Van Hollen
Cantwell	Murphy	Warner
Cortez Masto	Murray	Warnock
Fetterman	Ossoff	Warren
Gallego	Padilla	Wyden
Gillibrand	Peters	
Heinrich	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—4

Cassidy	Tillis
Duckworth	Tuberville

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGERTY). On this vote, the yeas are 62, the nays are 34. The motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Harold D. Mooty III, of Alabama, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Alabama.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, while Republican leaders continue trying to ignore this healthcare crisis and insisting on shutting down the government rather than even considering talking to us about how we prevent these premiums from doubling across the country, I have been listening to folks back home who are painfully aware healthcare premiums are about to skyrocket and who are deeply concerned about what it is going to mean for their families and for their communities.

So last week, when the Republican leader sent us home, yet again, instead of working with us to end this shutdown and address the healthcare crisis, I made a visit to Sea Mar Community Health Centers' Oak Harbor Clinic. Why? To hear from doctors and healthcare providers about what is just beyond the horizon if Republicans insist on inaction. I heard about how healthcare cuts Republicans passed are going to devastate our hospitals, devastate our clinics and health centers, and I heard about how these massive premium hikes that are being announced right now—the ones Republicans are trying very hard to ignore—are going to push millions of people off their healthcare plans.

One person I spoke with serves on the board of an insurer on the Washington Health Benefit Exchange. He warned me that, if we do not save these ACA tax credits, they are anticipating so many customers will be priced out that the number of individuals they cover through the marketplace will drop 35 to 50 percent.

You know, there is already a loud chorus of people speaking out con-

cerned about this in my State and across the country. I have spoken with small business owners who are going to see their premiums double, even triple, and some quadruple, who are having to rethink whether they try to keep their small business doors open and maybe go without coverage or, alternatively, just pack it in and try to find a job with an employer-sponsored plan.

I have spoken with retirees that are not yet old enough for Medicare who have gotten notices that their monthly premiums are about to go through the roof. In some cases, we are talking about thousands of dollars a month.

And here is the thing, not only do I know there are more stories like this across the country, I also know there are going to be many more stories pouring in very shortly because the reality is, there are rate hikes in the mail right now going out to people who had no idea about the Republican healthcare crisis and that it was going to hit them in the end. Rates are being set now. People are window shopping in many States and panicking from the sticker shock.

In Idaho, open enrollment is now underway. It has started. That means right now families are seeing the cold, hard numbers and the sharp increase it will cost them to stay covered.

And in 2 weeks, that same nightmare is coming to every State in the country.

Who do Republicans think they are fooling when they try to just ignore this? What in the world are they talking about when they say “deal with it later”? These price hikes are going to get locked in. There is no later. We need to act now.

There was “an earlier,” though. Perhaps we should talk about that for a minute because Democrats have been calling for action on this for months. And where were Republicans? Why wouldn't Republicans sit down with us to talk about healthcare in September? Why wouldn't they talk about healthcare in August? Why couldn't they find a single minute to work with us on healthcare in July or June or even May? After all, they had plenty of time this summer to shovel tax breaks at billionaires and put over a trillion dollars in healthcare funding on the chopping block.

They spent months on billionaires, but they can't be bothered when it comes to healthcare. They can't be bothered to help our working families. They would rather shut down the government than sit down and talk about preventing these premiums from doubling.

But Democrats are going to talk about healthcare, whether Republicans want to or not.

House Republicans have been hiding from this issue for a month. I am not kidding. They have literally been on vacation for nearly a month now. Hiding from this problem will not make it go away. Those rate hikes in the mail—they are going out to our constituents.

Window shopping is going live. Folks can now go online in many States and see the exact cost of Republican inaction.

And open enrollment is still marching ahead. It is underway now in Idaho. And in a few weeks, it is going to be across the Nation.

If you are a Republican who thinks that somehow families will not notice their premiums doubling, somehow they won't mind that their healthcare costs jump a couple hundred dollars a month—or, in some cases, by the way, a couple thousand dollars a month—here is your advice: Stop taking your marching orders from billionaires like President Trump and start listening to those people back home. Talk to the farmers. Actually, a quarter of them are covered on these exchanges. Talk to small business owners like I have; talk to employees, many of whom are covered through the exchange, because they are the ones who will feel the pain from this and they know it and they are begging Congress to act.

And do you know what? Three fourths of the people who rely on the ACA tax credits live in red States. And the 10 States where folks who lose these tax credits will see the largest premium increases? They are all red States. So shutdown or not, Republicans can only ignore this issue if they ignore their own constituents.

So to our Republican leaders: Don't hide from your constituents. Don't hide from this healthcare crisis you are causing. Quit hiding from the negotiating table. The clock is not just ticking; the alarm is going off. We need to act now before these premium hikes become unavoidable.

Democrats are at the table. We always have been at the table. We are ready to work out a deal that reopens the government and addresses the healthcare crisis.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, it is day 16 of the Schumer shutdown. During this time, President Trump has been working to guarantee that our troops get paid, ensure women and children continue receiving food assistance, and end the conflict in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, the Democrats continue holding the government hostage. As a result, air traffic controller shortages are causing flight delays, and some rural airports in Iowa may soon be forced to suspend operations. Seniors have lost access to some health services. The FDA is unable to process new drug and medical device applications, delaying the availability of new medical products.

And Senator SCHUMER is taking pride in his shutdown, claiming that “every day gets better for us.”

Who is this “us” that it is getting better for? Because I know my folks back home really don't appreciate that attitude. Only a Washington politician would delight in causing such dysfunction.

And while Congress will be paid for failing to do its job, many essential government employees who have continued to work through this shutdown will likely miss their next paycheck.

The President is ensuring our troops get paid this week, a move that is being protested by some Democrats.

Now, my daughter serves on Active Duty. She is a young Army officer, and she had to sit down and counsel her troops last week on where they could go to get loans so they could make their obligated payments.

So, thank you, President Trump, for taking care of my daughter and her soldiers.

Meanwhile, 750,000 nonessential government employees—who haven't worked at all in these past weeks—will be paid for doing nothing. It costs \$400 million every workday to provide back-pay to those that are furloughed during Schumer's shutdown. As of today, the pricetag to pay nonessential bureaucrats not to work is \$4.8 billion—\$4.8 billion.

Taxpayers should all be asking: Why is Washington spending money on anyone or anything that is nonessential?

President Trump is permanently eliminating many of these nonessential positions as part of a reduction in force, or RIF.

So here are some of my suggestions for getting rid of the riffraff with a RIF.

First up, eliminate the positions of Federal employees and contractors who weren't even working before the government shutdown. While millions of Americans have two or more jobs to make ends meet, these Federal employees aren't working at all. There are dozens of National Laboratory employees with nothing to do who spend the workday catnapping or playing cards and games.

To pass time, one of them started journaling. One of his entries reads:

Did nothing all day today over 10 hours in here.

The following day he wrote:

I do hope to play another good game of chess.

They are not the only ones with nothing to do. A Department of Energy contractor actually filed a complaint that he was getting paid for work he wasn't doing. So good on him—at least he is honest. For years, he and his co-workers have been spending their time looking for things to do, watching Netflix and taking naps. He says he is "begging for work," adding, "I can't believe I am getting paid to do nothing."

If Federal employees can't even justify their own salary, how can anyone else?

I have also uncovered bureaucrats who are holding several different government jobs simultaneously but aren't doing any of them. For example, a full-time HUD employee was being paid for two other full-time—got this, folks? She was being paid for two other full-time government contractor jobs.

That is three full-time jobs in total. She frequently billed taxpayers for working more than 24 hours in a single day.

Gosh, if I could find more than 24 hours in a day, that would be pretty extraordinary.

But this woman was paid \$225,000 for hours she never worked in nearly 3 years. Three full-time jobs, people—not working any of them.

This isn't an isolated case, either.

I have introduced my Double Dippers Act to crosscheck paychecks and payrolls to identify and stop bureaucrats from double billing taxpayers for work they are not even doing.

OK, don't laugh. This is true here.

There are plenty of other non-essential jobs that can be nominated immediately, beginning with the multitude of gimmicky government mascots. I am not talking about Smokey the Bear—OK?—not talking about Smokey the Bear, but rather other costume characters you probably have never even heard of, like the National Parks Service's Lupe the Ringtail, who is so frightening that Lupe makes children cry. Owlie Skywarn—I am sure you have all heard of Owlie Skywarn, with the National Weather Service.

Another Parks Service mascot is Riley the Roadrunner; Puddles the Blue Goose, with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and everybody's favorite, Franklin the Fair Market Fox, from HUD.

I say, let's "fur-lough" these furballs forever.

Tax dollars should never be spent paying for any of these do-nothing jobs, especially when there are severe staffing shortages for critical jobs, like air traffic controllers and VA healthcare providers. The folks who are working these important jobs are too often overworked, understaffed, and underappreciated. So these folks can go.

I commend all of those essential workers who are doing the jobs that we need done on a daily basis. They continue to answer the call of duty during the Schumer shutdown without knowing when they may receive their next paycheck. Thank you for putting your country first. And on behalf of my fellow Iowans, I would also like to extend to them a very hardy thank-you.

To those who have been collecting paychecks without even working, even before the shutdown began, all I can really say is thanks for nothing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS  
ACT, 2026

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I rise today to address the moment that we are in here in the U.S. Senate. We are about to proceed to a vote on a motion that the majority leader has laid on the floor.

I am the senior Democrat on the subcommittee of Appropriations that writes the bill that funds our national

defense. I have worked well and closely with Senator MCCONNELL in this undertaking this year. I am about to vote no on proceeding to take up the House Defense bill, which may surprise some of my colleagues from both parties or my constituents or folks who are wondering: What the heck is going on here? So I wanted to take a few minutes and speak to this moment, my vote, and hopefully our path forward.

Americans care deeply about security—about the security that comes from knowing that you and your family won't suddenly be bankrupted by unexpected healthcare costs, the loss of health insurance, and the security that comes from knowing that millions of highly skilled, trained, and dedicated American men and women are on the line around the world, shoulder to shoulder with our allies, defending America's security and that of the world, and we need a path towards addressing both.

The Federal Government is currently shut down. It is shut down because we can't come to an agreement here in the Senate, with the President, and with the House to deal with the expiring Affordable Care Act tax credits that make it affordable.

Letters are about to go out in my home State of Delaware that will tell folks who get their health insurance through the Affordable Care Act that their rates are going to go up dramatically—in many cases, more than 100 percent—because of expiring tax credits.

Well, what has that got to do with national defense? Bluntly, the process here in this Senate, the process with our President, and the process of spending or not spending appropriated funds has destroyed a lot of the trust that is essential for the Senate as a body to work, for the Congress to legislate, and for our Federal Government to reopen.

In the last Congress, I was the chair of the subcommittee that wrote the appropriations bill. Roughly, \$32 billion went to USAID—an Agency that no longer exists. Some of you may remember DOGE—an Elon Musk-led effort to get into and tear up and, in the case of USAID, to tear apart our longstanding, decades-old, U.S. foreign assistance program. It did a lot more damage than just that.

In many ways, the actions that began in January and picked up speed in the spring caused alarm and concern by many of us in the Senate that we have an OMB Director and an administration willing to violate bipartisan agreements from the last Congress, commitments to spend money, and contracts and agreements with partners and allies around the world and across many different areas.

In fact, just yesterday, a Federal district court judge in California ruled that the reductions in force—the layoffs, the RIFs—announced by the administration during this current shutdown were illegal because they were targeted and partisan.