

neighboring county to my county, Montgomery, in rural southwest Iowa, says the shutdown is putting a strain on beginning farmers as well as the elderly producers in her community.

And the closure of USDA service centers is financially impacting farmers, which will have ripple effects on everyone for months to come. Thousands of families in Iowa are already facing the real possibility of not being able to put food on the table.

Recipients of SNAP will not receive benefits next month, and WIC—Women, Infants, and Children—support for mothers and babies will also run out very soon.

And Iowans aren't alone in this.

If Democrats do not allow the government to reopen, half of our States will run out of money to provide SNAP benefits in November. That means millions of children across the country will have food taken away from them by the Schumer shutdown. This is a particularly cruel way to make a political point, especially at Thanksgiving time.

So most folks here in this body really understand that there are a lot of families that mean a lot to me, not only my families in Iowa but then also all of our military families across the United States.

So my daughter and my son-in-law serve on Active-Duty Army. My daughter and I talk just about every day, either by FaceTime or by phone, and the shutdown is really impacting her younger soldiers. So every day my daughter and I go through those discussions of where will the soldiers find food. Her discussion with me today centered around a talk she had with their military chaplain yesterday. She was typing up a letter so that her soldiers could receive gift cards before Thanksgiving from the chaplain's funds. But unfortunately, the chaplain said: I don't even know that we will have funds so that we can give the gift cards for the families because of the shutdown.

One of the military units has actually started its own internal food bank so that soldiers can go to that food bank and get food for their families. Anyone that has served in the military or knows someone that serves in the military understands that already our military men and women, many of them qualify for SNAP even though they are employed by the military.

These are families that are currently serving every single day with the inability to get paid. Now, thankfully, the President was able to scratch together dollars from the Department of Defense to pay them their first check, but this is a long-term problem we are facing now. And the President won't be able to keep doing that.

So we have all of our Federal employees, our military men and women that are not getting paid. They can't literally put food on the table. One of my daughter's soldiers has had to drop out of college. This NCO works full-time

during the day and tries to do better by going to college at night. And she can't afford to pay the tuition now that is required, and there are no appropriated funds to move forward with her college. And so she had to pull her enrollment yesterday.

So we are impacting families in all of our home States. We are impacting the men and women that are defending our Nation. This standoff is a fight for survival. But what I am doing here, I am fighting for the folks who are continuing to work hard every single day without a paycheck or going without the help they need just simply to get by. But the Democrats are fighting for their own political survival.

We witnessed here on this very floor earlier today the majority of Democrats vote no on paying these essential workers in the Federal Government. Air traffic controllers, our military men and women, the Capitol policemen that protect this complex, the staff that we see here sitting today. They voted no. One Democrat Senator candidly confided to *The Hill* newspaper that if Democrats vote to reopen the government, "people are going to get hammered" by their liberal base.

Another admits there are enough Democrats who would vote to reopen the government "if people were not terrified of getting the guillotine."

Apparently, the socialist uprising within the Democrat party is turning into a modern-day French revolution, folks.

And playing the role of Marie Antoinette proclaiming, "Let them eat cake," is Senator SCHUMER.

The truth is, Democrats are literally—I mean literally—taking food out of the mouths of babes to save themselves from their own unhinged voters, instead of bending to the loud-mouthed, liberal lunatics and socialist sociopaths who make up their base. Democrats should listen to their colleague Senator FETTERMAN of Pennsylvania.

Senator FETTERMAN called the shutdown "bad political theater," adding that "there are no winners here. It's not getting better every day here. People are going to start to get really hungry."

He is absolutely right, folks, and the Democrats know it is causing pain. In fact, that is the whole point of this exercise. Congresswoman KATHERINE CLARK, the second in line, the second in line in the House Democratic leadership, said the quiet part out loud, stating: "Families are going to suffer because of the shutdown."

She calls that suffering "leverage." Leverage. The American people and their suffering babies are leverage. Using the suffering of the very people we were elected to serve as political leverage is just plain sick.

Perhaps Republicans need to start using our own leverage: the Senate schedule. If CHUCK SCHUMER cancels Thanksgiving for millions of families across America who can't feed their

children, the holidays should be canceled for the Senate as well.

We should all be prepared to stay here until we reopen the government so no child will go to bed hungry because of Schumer's shutdown shenanigans.

This is a serious job, folks. We need to take it seriously. We need to act seriously. And we need to ensure the shutdown ends.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

REMEMBERING BRUCE SAGAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, local papers are the lifeline of our communities. They inform citizens of not only what is going on in their city halls, but their wedding halls as well. These papers connect Americans and remind us that we are part of a community greater than ourselves. This was something that Bruce Sagan understood well, and for more than 70 years, he saved newspapers, theatres, and helped preserve Chicago's cultural vibrance. Bruce was the embodiment of an engaged citizen; he was someone who constantly strived to support his community, and it is with great sadness that I share the news of his passing.

Bruce was born in Summit, NJ, and at just 16 years old, he moved to Chicago to study at the University of Chicago in Hyde Park. While professors may have missed Bruce in the classroom, they could not miss him in the pages of the *Chicago Maroon*, UChicago's newspaper. Bruce was an avid writer and supporter of the *Maroon*, constantly working to ensure that the paper covered the important issues of the day.

On UChicago's campus, the issue of racial discrimination was dominating the discussion. A group of students were working to expose the medical school's practice of rejecting Black students, and while students lined the streets in protest, Bruce was busy behind a typewriter, working to publicize their efforts and shine a light on discrimination. His work at the *Maroon* in support of integration was an early sign of the values Bruce brought to journalism.

Bruce's passion for journalism couldn't be satisfied by a student paper, so he left college and the *Chicago Maroon* to go work for the *City News Bureau*. Known across Chicago as the "reporter's boot camp," *City News*

was a consortium of newspapers that coordinated routine coverage. It was an incubator of journalistic talent that helped launch the careers of legendary Chicago journalists like Mike Royko and Seymour Hersh. At City News, Bruce was one of the overnight editors, working from midnight to 8 a.m., or as he described, “the mafia assassination beat.”

But 2 years after he joined City News, Bruce received an offer that would change the course of his career. One of Illinois’ oldest local papers, the Hyde Park Herald, was failing, and a group of concerned citizens asked Bruce if he would buy the Herald to keep it in circulation. While the prospect of buying and saving a paper was daunting, 24-year-old Bruce charged ahead and took out a \$2,500 loan to purchase the Herald. Thanks to Bruce, the paper did not miss a single issue. This began Bruce’s long career as an owner and manager of local papers. Soon after Bruce purchased the Hyde Park Herald, he acquired the Southtown Economist, which he grew into dozens of local newspapers spanning across the Chicago suburbs. Under Bruce’s leadership, these papers reached hundreds of thousands of Illinoisans as Bruce modernized their printing processes and pushed them to take a moral stand on the issues.

What made Bruce so successful was that he recognized the civic value of newspapers. In a Time Magazine interview, Bruce once decried how it was harder for someone to know what is going on in their own city than to find out what Khrushchev is doing in Cuba. Bruce wanted to demystify what was happening in Illinois. He took on topics that impacted every part of civic life, ranging from the corruption of political machines of Springfield to the protection of Frank Lloyd Wright’s famous Robie House. Anyone who worked at the Herald often would see Bruce’s office light on late into the night, a symbol of his tireless work in support of his city.

But Bruce’s commitment to public life in Chicago did not stop at the edge of the bullpen; he also was a passionate supporter of the arts. In 1965, Bruce bought the Harper Theatre to create an “off-Broadway” experience in Chicago. Bruce moved the Hyde Park Herald’s offices to the second floor of the theater and renovated the space as a “monument to urban renewal.” For decades, the Harper Theatre supported local musicians, dancers, and actors as they honed their crafts and shared their talents with the city. The Harper Theater was also where Bruce saw the Joffrey Ballet for the first time as part of the first modern dance festival in the Midwest, which he organized. Three decades later, Bruce helped facilitate the Joffrey Ballet’s move from New York to Chicago.

While mentioning all of Bruce’s contributions to support and save Chicago’s various cultural institutions would be difficult, his efforts did not go

unnoticed. In 2022, then-President Biden awarded Bruce with the National Medal of Arts. Cheering that selection was David Axelrod, who got his start working as a cub reporter for Bruce. I can think of no one more deserving of this honor than Bruce, a man who spent seven decades fighting to strengthen the ties of community and the richness of cultural life in Chicago.

But Bruce did not work alone. His wife Bette Cerf Hill was Bruce’s faithful partner as they both engaged in and supported every aspect of Chicago’s art scene, from literature festivals to architectural centers. Loretta and I send our deepest condolences to Bette; their five children Paul, Alex, Catherine, Teresa, and Diana; their 12 grandchildren; and their 9 great-grandchildren.

Chicago will be forever grateful for all that Bruce has done to enrich our cultural heritage. While we will miss Bruce dearly, his legacy will continue to benefit our city for generations. Whether someone watches a play at the Steppenwolf Theatre or reads the latest article in the Hyde Park Herald, I hope they take a moment to remember Bruce.

S. 3012

Mr. OSSOFF. Mr. President, the Senate remains at an impasse over the renewal of soon-to-expire health insurance premium tax credits under the Affordable Care Act. Americans’ health insurance premiums will skyrocket in 2026 unless the Congress acts to renew these subsidies. Time is running out to solve this problem. The enrollment period for next year’s insurance plans opens in just 9 days. The Trump administration’s intransigent refusal to work across the aisle to negotiate a solution has resulted in the ongoing government shutdown.

During this shutdown, military servicemembers, air traffic controllers, and TSA employees are among those who simply must come to work despite the lapse in congressional appropriations. They should be paid for that work. That is why today I voted to proceed to consideration of S. 3012, the Shutdown Fairness Act, sponsored by the Senator from Wisconsin. Senators from both parties should work together to ensure payment of military servicemembers and others in critical roles, including controllers, TSA workers, and those working at Georgia’s CDC. Debate of this bill should include an amendment process to improve the bill, including by limiting the President’s unilateral authority to determine which Federal workers are paid and which are not. Such authority could be abused by an executive determined to pay favored Federal workers and deny disfavored Federal workers pay without regard for congressional appropriations.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, yesterday evening, I missed rollcall

vote No. 583, the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Stephen Chad Meredith to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky. Had I been present, I would have voted no.

Yesterday evening, I missed rollcall vote No. 584, confirmation of the nomination of William W. Mercer to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Montana. Had I been present, I would have voted no.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO STACEY MORTENSEN

• Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate the distinguished career of Stacey Mortensen, a dedicated leader who has helped transform public transportation in California’s Central Valley and strengthened rail systems all across our State.

For more than three decades, Stacey has championed transportation and rail infrastructure in California. As a native of the region, she knows firsthand how important these investments are for families and businesses in our communities.

Thanks to Stacey’s work, thousands of Californians have enjoyed better transportation options. Among these is the Altamont Corridor Express, which launched in 1988 with just two weekday roundtrips. Thanks in no small part to her vision and determination, ACE now serves 10 stations and nearly 3,000 riders every day.

In the mid-2000s, Stacey spearheaded a Memorandum of Understanding among 20 different agencies in Merced, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, and Sacramento Counties to coordinate and streamline planning for service expansions between Merced and Sacramento. These collaborative efforts laid the foundation for what is now known as the Valley Rail Program. She also played a pivotal role in the creation of the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority, establishing a regional governance model for service in the San Joaquin Valley.

Throughout her more than 30 years of service in Stockton, Stacey has held an unwavering belief in the extraordinary potential of the Central Valley and its people.

Stacey’s work has led to one of the largest rail infrastructure improvements in the Nation—exceeding \$500 million—and helped secure nearly \$2 billion in funding for the Valley Rail Program, which will ultimately connect with California’s high-speed rail network in Merced.

Her leadership advanced key agreements with Valley Link and the California High-Speed Rail Authority, formally designating the rail commission and the San Joaquin Joint Powers Authority as prospective operators for future rail services.