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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the Honorable JAMES C. JUSTICE, a Senator from the State of West Virginia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Listen to our prayers, Almighty God, and hurry to provide us with Your wisdom. Inspire us to trust You, for You are our mighty rock and fortress.

Lord, lead and guide our lawmakers, enabling them to honor Your Name as they follow Your leading. Protect them from the hidden traps that derail freedom, as they seek to reopen our government. Show Yourself strong, even when they wander from Your plan. Empower our Senators to trust You, seek Your wisdom, and obey Your precepts.

We pray in Your matchless Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, November 7, 2025.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JAMES C. JUSTICE, a Senator from the

State of West Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. JUSTICE thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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.

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS ACT, 2026—Motion to Proceed

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 168, H.R. 5371.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

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.

Mr. BARRASSO. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the junior Senator from Connecticut certainly believes in saying the quiet part out loud.

This is what he said:

I think there will be some pretty substantial damage done to a Democratic brand that has been rehabilitated, if on the heels of an election in which the people told us to keep fighting, we immediately stop fighting.

He said that on a podcast yesterday.

He went on to say:

The 2026 election is just 12 months away. And if we surrender without having gotten anything, and we cause a lot of folks in this country who had started to believe in the Democratic Party to retreat again, I worry that it will be hard to sort of get them back up off the mat in time for next fall's election cycle.

Let me repeat that.

This is what he said:

I worry that it will be hard to sort of get them back up off the mat in time for next fall's election cycle.

Let that sink in for a minute.

I don't think it is a secret to anybody that Democrats shut down the government for political reasons. There has been plenty of news coverage of the incredible pressure their far-left base has been exerting, but in case anyone was still under the impression that Democrats were driving this shutdown toward its 40th day out of concern for the

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



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American people, well, the junior Democrat from Connecticut pretty handily dispelled that notion.

Again, this is what he said:

I worry that it will be hard to sort of get them back up off the mat in time for next fall's election cycle.

Just in case anyone needed any additional testimony, Axios reported on Wednesday:

A set of post-election talking points circulated among Democratic congressional offices warned: "Caving without concessions would sap Democrats' momentum and undercut the party's support from its base." . . . "Democrats throwing [Republicans] a rope in exchange for nothing would be political self-sabotage," it added.

"Political self-sabotage."

Now, there are two very striking things about these quotes. One, of course, is the focus not on the American people but on how to ensure Democrats win the next election. Two is the fact that progressive Democrats apparently want to keep this shutdown going forever.

We are on day 38 of Democrats' shutdown—day 38. Federal workers have gone more than a month now without pay. They don't know how they are going to pay their mortgages or buy food, thanks to Democrats. A lot of them are supposed to get another paycheck today. Instead, they will see a deposit of exactly zero dollars in their bank accounts. And that is just the tip of the iceberg.

Head Start preschools have closed. Veterans programs have shuttered. Many Medicare recipients can't get access to telehealth. National Guard troops aren't training. SNAP benefits are in profound jeopardy. There are people going hungry right now because Democrats refuse to agree to a clean, nonpartisan funding extension.

Of course, then there is air travel. Because of staffing shortages caused by Democrats' shutdown, the Department of Transportation had to issue a mandatory reduction in air travel beginning today. Hundreds of thousands of people will be affected every day, to say nothing of disruptions to the movement of packages and goods. But nothing seems to move Democrats—nothing—not hungry Americans, not massive disruptions to our economy—nothing.

If I were a Democrat, I would be embarrassed—I mean, flatout embarrassed—to walk into this building every day; to walk past the men and women of the Capitol Police, who are not getting paid thanks to Democrats; to walk past junior staffers, many of whom are, undoubtedly, frantic, by this point, as they wonder how they are going to pay their rent and continue to buy food.

How can Democrats look any of these people in the eyes?

And please don't tell me they are fighting for some greater good for the American people. If Democrats can be said to be fighting for anyone at all besides themselves, they are fighting for

a fraction of a fraction, for a tiny percentage of a small percentage of Americans who are on ObamaCare. The number of people they are supposedly fighting for is dwarfed—and I say dwarfed—by the number of people whose lives and livelihoods they are damaging.

And as for the claim that Democrats got some kind of mandate from the American people, on Tuesday, to continue jeopardizing food stamps for 40 million Americans in need, give me a break. Democrats performed well in three States where Democrats often perform well.

Congratulations.

I really don't think that means that the American people have all signed up to be democratic socialists, and it sure as heck doesn't provide a good reason for making 40 million Americans go hungry.

I would like to think that the junior Senator from Connecticut doesn't represent all Senate Democrats, but if there are Senate Democrats out there who do still care about hard-working Americans and not just Democrats' election prospects, the time to act is now, not when the far left decides this exercise can be over, not when Federal workers are lining up at food banks for their Thanksgiving meals—now, today. I hope—I hope—there are at least five more Democrats out there with a backbone who will vote with us to reopen the government and end these weeks of misery for the American people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, today is November 7, 2025. We are now 1 month and 7 days into the longest shutdown in the history of the American Government.

Democrats can stand here and claim they have broken the record, but for what? For leverage? For politics?

Meanwhile, in every State in this Union, the American people are getting hurt. They don't seem to care one bit.

Soldiers are working without pay at Fort Bragg in Georgia. Where are the two Democrat Senators from Georgia?

A single mom in Michigan is struggling to put food on the table for her children. Where are the two Democrat Senators from Michigan?

Capitol Police officers and staff members on this very floor in this very building are struggling to pay their bills. Do the Democrat Senators care about any of them? The government is still closed. They are not getting paid.

Each and every one of these people is being hurt by the Schumer shutdown—every one of them—and every day, it gets worse for them. Yet Senator SCHU-

MER bragged to the press—bragged to them. He said:

Every day gets better for us.

I am wondering who "us" is. Certainly not the American people. Certainly not the people whose flights were grounded today all across the country.

You know, to keep our airlines and to keep our skies safe, the FAA directed airlines to reduce the number of flights. It is the right thing to do. This has impacted airports all across this country. That is the impact of what the Democrats are doing by keeping this government shut.

The FAA Administrator—someone with 35 years of experience in the field—said:

We're in [all] new territory.

Never seen anything like this before.

And here is what really should terrify the American people: It is one Democrat staffer who said Democrats won't open the government until planes fall out of the sky. Can you believe that? Let that sink in. Democrats are waiting for a disaster, and in the process, they are gambling with American lives.

Senator CHRIS MURPHY of Connecticut, a Democrat with Presidential ambitions based on his scheduling and his speeches—he admitted it on the record. He said in an interview just yesterday with Punchbowl News—Senator MURPHY said that reopening the government would do, he said, "substantial damage" to the Democrats' "brand." There you have it. Bad for the brand: a functioning government.

The Democrat brand means more to them than 42 million hungry Americans. The Democrat brand means more to them than military families who aren't getting paid. The Democrat brand means more to them than safety in the skies.

Let's call what we are seeing with the Democrat shutdown what it is. It is cruel, and it is heartless.

Now, let's be fair. Even some Democrats now recognize that it is cruel and heartless. They are starting to turn on each other. One Democrat staffer admitted to the press that the far-left Democrats in their caucus have no plan to ever end the shutdown—none, zero. They want to keep it going forever. The staffer even admitted the far-left Democrats are hurting people, and they are doing it for political gain. This is the direct quote from the Democrat staff member, Senate staff: "[F]amilies who can afford it the least . . . are . . . getting walloped" every day the shutdown continues.

Mr. President, the Democrats can and should end the shutdown today. Republicans have a clean, bipartisan continuing resolution at the desk to reopen the government. We want to pair this with three full-time appropriations bills. These are bills that have already passed the Senate with bipartisan support. They have been negotiated on a bipartisan basis with the

House—progress. We need to get it done.

These bills would fully fund veterans' care. They would fully fund our Capitol Police. They would fully fund food assistance in America, such as the SNAP and the WIC Programs. This is a very reasonable deal, a reasonable proposal—a deal that Democrats earlier this week asked Republicans to put onto the floor. And if it passes, the Schumer shutdown will end quickly. Mr. President, 13,000 air traffic controllers would get paid, 50,000 TSA agents would get paid, 1.3 million military members would be paid, food assistance for 42 million Americans would be fully funded, flights would get restored, and the government would reopen.

Some Senate Democrats have signaled they will still vote no—no. Evidently, they want the pain; they want the pressure. As Members of this body, as well as the Democrat whip, said to the press on television—she said they want “leverage” to continue so they can score political points.

Let me be clear about what a “no” vote means. A “no” vote is a vote to refuse to pay air traffic controllers who are working, refuse to pay TSA agents who have been working for the last 37 days, refuse to pay members of the military who continue to defend us and are serving us all around the world, refuse to pay Capitol Police officers who are here in this very building and that the Democratic Senators walk by each and every time they come into this Chamber. A “no” vote is a vote to cut more flights and to cause more chaos for families hoping to travel over Thanksgiving. A “no” vote is a vote to deny food to 42 million hungry Americans. A “no” vote means Democrats continue to play their dangerous game of the politics of pain.

There is no excuse—none—for voting no. Don't tell me “I want leverage,” which is what the Democrats have been saying. The American people are not leverage. They are not pawns. When Democrats treat American people as political pawns, the American people lose. And I don't want to hear them say “I stand on principle.” What are the principles when you allow 42 million Americans to continue to go hungry?

The American people are watching. They are watching to see who is fighting for them and who is simply using them as leverage.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have one word for my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and on my side of the aisle—one word: enough.

It is time for us to get down to the business of agreeing on some basic things. I think we can.

The first thing we need to do is to agree to reopen the Government of the United States of America. I believe we should do it before the sun sets today at 5:02 p.m. and 39 seconds.

The second thing we should agree on is to protect the families who are fac-

ing outrageous increases in health insurance premiums across the United States. If we cannot address the Affordable Care Act and make dramatic changes, we need to legislate for that to happen. And that rarely ever happens around here, but it should. That should be part of our agreement.

The third thing is that we need to support a bipartisan appropriations process to fund our government. We are lucky; we have two leaders on the Appropriations Committee—one a Republican, SUSAN COLLINS, and another a Democrat, PATTY MURRAY—who are competent and able to achieve that goal. It is time for us to get rid of the never-ending continuing resolutions and actually appropriate money for purposes that the public sent us here to honor.

The fourth thing is that we need to collectively apologize and pay in full all Federal employees and contractors as soon as possible. It is an embarrassment to come to work each day and realize that these wonderful people who are working with us—doing their job and doing it well and professionally—are not being paid.

Finally, we need to pass legislation to guarantee that this, the longest shutdown in U.S. history, is the last time Congress ever should be showing political resolve at the expense of food on the table for hungry children.

It is time for us to act. Enough.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MOODY). The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Madam President, this is the first time I have spoken on the floor about the government shutdown. Like a lot of people, I have been hoping we could find a way forward and sort of stop the disruption and madness that it is causing throughout the country.

I want to say to my colleagues who have been working together to find a solution to open up the government: I really appreciate your efforts very, very much.

I know, in this polarized environment, it is hard to reach across the aisle, but this moment dictates that we try. I have had some discussions, and I know a lot of my colleagues—Senators BRITT and COLLINS and many others—have spent a lot of time—MARKWAYNE MULLIN—trying to find common ground to open up the government so we can move forward and have a debate about healthcare and maybe find a solution—apparently to no avail.

There is a group of my Democratic colleagues who believe that “every day gets better for us.” That is Senator SCHUMER. They, I guess, apparently feel emboldened by the election.

The question I have for the country: Is every day getting better for you?

If you are trying to get to an airport or fly somewhere, I would say not so much. If you are a government employee working and not getting paid, not so much. There are a lot of services

that are being disrupted out there because the government is shut down.

The truth of the matter is both parties have had government shutdowns trying to get a policy win. One time we shut the government down, as Republicans, to get money to build the wall. We eventually got the money to build the wall because it was a very good idea, but it didn't happen through the shutdown. So I learned that shutting the government down trying to get a policy win is probably not good government.

Our Democrat friends, whatever day it is, they are shutting your government down—our government down—to try to make Republicans do something on healthcare we are just not going to do. They are trying to repeal elements of the working families tax cut, the Big Beautiful Bill—whatever you want to call it—that would prohibit healthcare funding going to illegal immigrants.

They are trying to repeal many of the things that we think are just good reforms—over a trillion dollars—pulling back a trillion and a half dollars to go into programs we think are not good investments. Investing in a program where illegal immigrants can get free healthcare just gives you more illegal immigration.

One of the things that we are trying to deal with is that Medicaid has grown 50 percent in the last 5 years, and we are trying to put it on a more sustainable path.

Helping rural hospitals—they want to take the provision out of the bill that would give \$50 billion to rural hospitals to help with Medicaid reform. So we are just not going to do that. That is never going to happen, nor should it.

So what do we do next?

I think the first thing we need to do is understanding that the statement “Every day gets better for us” is a lie—“us” being the United States. Every day that this thing drags on is bad for America. It is dangerous for America. It is dangerous to our national security—the people in the FBI and the CIA that have to work, no matter whether they get paid, simply to protect our Nation. So this madness really needs to end.

I think there are plenty of people over here that try to go forward and have a debate on healthcare and maybe find common ground, but not this way. The one thing I learned, in my time up here, is that taking hostages—political hostage-taking—shouldn't be overly rewarded. Political terrorism should never be rewarded.

And what you are doing over there by not finding a way forward is you are terrorizing the country for your own political benefit. You really are. You are engaging in political terrorism. You are making it hard for people to do things they need to do and have to do. You are making it hard for people to get services they need because of your political desire to beat us.

Well, I will tell you what; that needs to stop. So to my leadership here, you

all have done a great job—Senator THUNE particularly—by saying: We will talk, but we have got to open up the government first. I really appreciate what Senator THUNE has done in that regard.

But I want my colleagues to know, the longer this goes and the more people you hurt and the more you try to extract from your political hostage-taking, the less votes you are going to get from us, starting with me.

I am not going to give in to this. We are not going to reward people who do this. I understand trying to find common ground and getting something to give something. But you have gone way too far, and you are hurting way too many people, and you are asking for things that are really absurd.

So don't think you are going to open up the government with a handful of Democratic votes if this continues. You are going to need much more than that because you are going to lose me. I am not going to play this game any longer. This is bad for the country. And if we do it now, it will never end.

So, Senator SCHUMER, I couldn't disagree with you more. "Every day gets better for us." You clearly need to get out of Washington and talk to people outside the wacky left. You are disconnected with real life in America. Every day this goes on doesn't get better for us.

What are you asking us to do? You are demanding that we increase spending by a trillion and a half dollars from savings we obtained from the working families tax cut bill. We are not going to do that.

But the main thing that is driving this debate is a desire by Democrats to continue a program called ObamaCare that is not well designed. It is costing way too much. It is not delivering for the American people.

We are not going to do that.

Senator WELCH, a good friend, noted yesterday that the Affordable Care Act hasn't lived up to that billing, and there are things we can do on healthcare to lower costs to make life more affordable. But my statement is that the Affordable Care Act is unaffordable, and we are not going to reauthorize it because you demand we do so, because it makes no sense to keep throwing good money into this program.

Now, President Obama told us back in 2010, if we pass the Affordable Care Act—which is the "Unaffordable Care Act"—families would have a \$2,500-a-year decrease in their premiums for healthcare.

Well, that has turned out to be a big flop.

Healthcare premiums have gone up 100 percent from 2013 to 2019. So the Affordable Care Act is anything but, and they are asking for \$350 billion over a decade to keep these subsidies in place that they chose to do in a partisan way.

They are due to expire. If they were that great, why did you let them ex-

pire? The bottom line is, you are trying to hold us hostage as Republicans, making us invest in a program that is just not a good deal for America. No matter what you call it or how you want to sell it, you are selling a bad product, and that product needs to be discontinued as it exists today.

Who is the biggest winner of the Affordable Care Act? Not consumers. A dramatic increase in premiums—we didn't lower premiums by \$2,500 per family. They have gone up 100 percent in just a matter of years.

Now you are wanting to continue subsidies that create subsidies for the ObamaCare that nobody in the private sector has. The average person in America is paying about 25 percent of their premium that works for a company.

What they are trying to do is have most people pay nothing and allow people making up to hundreds of thousands of dollars to get subsidies for their healthcare. We just can't afford that.

Senator KLOBUCHAR talked about a husband and wife that retired early from a union job that had a combined income of \$130-some thousand, and that their premiums will go up. Well, the question is this: Do we need to be subsidizing premiums for people that make \$130-some thousand that have defined benefit plans plus Social Security?

The question becomes: What makes sense? What can we afford? What is the best way we can help the American people?

I will tell you the best way to help the American people is to stop the madness when it comes to ObamaCare.

What has happened since the passage of this bill?

Let me tell you what has happened. Healthcare companies—insurance companies in the healthcare space—have had their stock go up since 2010 by over 1,000 percent.

Now, what you want us to do is continue these subsidies that go to insurance companies that drive up the cost of healthcare. We are not going to do it. We are going to try to find a better way to use the money to give it to consumers so they can buy healthcare of their own choosing to create competition that doesn't exist to get the better healthcare outcome and save some money in the process.

So Democrats are insisting that Republicans continue the practice of taking your hard-earned tax dollars and making healthcare insurance companies incredibly, filthy rich.

Look at this chart. This is the S&P 500. These are different companies in the space. But the main healthcare companies that benefit from ObamaCare have seen their stock increase by 1,000 percent, with no end in sight.

UnitedHealthcare, 1,177 percent increase in stock; Cigna, 822 percent; 414 percent; Humana, 490 percent—they need to up their game. M-O-L-I-N-A—

whoever they are—859 percent; C-E-N-T-E-N-E, 604 percent; Aetna, 595 percent—since the passage of this bill.

We are not, as Republicans, going to continue what you created, a windfall for health insurance companies, inflationary mechanisms in healthcare without an end.

We are going to stop and fix what you created in 2010, which is an out-of-control, inflationary approach to healthcare that rewards insurance companies over anybody else.

You told a big lie to the American people when you passed this bill—that their premiums would go down by \$2,500 per family. They have gone up 100 percent.

We are going to stop the madness. We are going to come out with a proposal that will have a different outcome than this. We are going to come out with a proposal that allows this money to go to people to make better choices for them to create competition that doesn't exist. And the big loser will be the insurance companies. The big winner will be the consumer. And President Trump stands ready to work with you on the other side to get an outcome we can all live with.

We cannot live with this, folks. We cannot live with ObamaCare and these subsidies as designed because they are creating runaway inflation in healthcare. They are rewarding the biggest healthcare companies in the country at the expense of the taxpayer.

We are going to break this cycle. Now, how long will that take? I don't know. But I know this: I am not going to be forced to continue this wasteful, inefficient program called ObamaCare because you tell me I have to, to open the government. I will not.

And we will have an election one of these days, and we will see how this plays out over time. We will see what the American people want. Do they want to continue throwing money at insurance companies like this, with increased costs to the taxpayers and people that participate in this program? Or would they like something new and different that would break the endless reward to healthcare companies and start rewarding consumers to get better outcomes in lowering their premiums?

We will have a debate about that one day. We will have an election, probably, over that. But what we are not going to do is be held hostage for you to get your way, for me to vote to authorize a program that is failing, that was a lie. And I am going to do what I can to fix this.

And if you want to continue to shut down the government, holding me and others hostage to continue this garbage, we are not going to do it. We will be rewarding the worst possible behavior in politics. You will just get more of this.

So here is my advice to my Democratic colleagues: Work with people who are trying to find a way forward to reopen the government, to have a conversation about how better to deliver

affordable healthcare, working in a bipartisan manner, and we will get to where we need to go as a country.

We will not give in to political terrorism and hostage-taking. Your desire to keep the government shut down is terrorizing Americans. Americans are losing vital services. Their lives have been turned upside down because you care more about continuing a terrible program than you do them. We are not going to give in.

I promise you I will work with you to get a better outcome. I promise you I will vote no to your political hostage-taking, and let the chips fall where they may. You are overplaying your hand. You are doing a lot of damage to good people that just want a better life and some certainty in their life.

I try to work with you when I can on the other side. Sometimes we argue, and I try to argue effectively. But I will not be part of this process any longer. You are destroying the lives of Americans for a political desire that is unreasonable.

You are asking me and others to continue a program that is fundamentally broken, that is inflationary. And the only winner of ObamaCare are the largest healthcare companies in America that are making excessive profits off a healthcare system you designed, and all you want is more people signed up on this program. And you are rewarding the insurance companies for finding more people who are making a fortune. And the delivery of healthcare is costing more, and the quality is going down.

We are not going to do this. We are not going to give in to this. So my approach is a nightmare for the healthcare insurance companies.

Our approach will be the biggest loser will be healthcare insurance companies. The biggest winner will be consumers who will have choices they don't have, to date, and money they can have that they don't have, to date, to buy a better product. That is what this is about. The insistence of the Democratic Party to excessively reward healthcare insurance companies who are doing their bidding to sign up people on government healthcare that is inefficient and is not working.

You don't care it is inefficient and not working. You just want more people, and you are using the insurance companies in the healthcare space as your agents, as your proxies, and they are willingly doing your bidding.

To the insurance companies in the healthcare space, your days are numbered when it comes to this crap.

To my Democratic colleagues, you want a debate on healthcare, let it begin right now. Look what you are doing with taxpayer dollars. You are not relieving the cost of healthcare to working people, you are increasing their premiums. You are making healthcare more inflationary, and the only people that really are winning big are healthcare insurance companies who are willingly playing this game. And they will never stop.

Why would they? Why would a healthcare insurance company turn their back on this program when they are making a killing?

Well, I don't know what is going to happen or when it is going to happen, but I know this: I will never vote to continue this madness. If you are insisting that I have to continue this program, I will not. I owe it to the people of South Carolina and the country to break this cycle.

We owe it to the people of America to open up our government and have a logical discussion about making healthcare more affordable and breaking the cycle of runaway inflation.

You are on a course that is going to disrupt American people's lives to get an outcome that is terrible for the country, which is continuing ObamaCare the way it is constructed. You will not be successful.

I will make sure there are enough Republicans over here to say no to your plan to hold us hostage and continue to terrorize this country. You have gone too far.

If I were you, Senator SCHUMER, I would rethink because I am telling you, every day is not getting better for you because every day is getting worse for the people in this country who interact with the government, who travel, who are working and not getting paid. It is getting worse for them, and you are demanding something of me and others that we will not give in to. We will not be held hostage to continue ObamaCare that has been a miserable failure.

We will not be held hostage to continue to give money to healthcare companies, insurance companies, to enrich them at the expense of the American people.

So I don't know when it ends or how it ends, but I know what the outcome will be with my vote. We are going to break the cycle of rewarding healthcare insurance companies at the expense of the consumer. We are going to stop this madness with my vote.

I hope we can find a way forward, but that way forward will not include what is going on today. So I will be voting no to the idea that we will continue these subsidies—rewarding healthcare insurance companies insane amounts, driving up premium costs, and getting bad outcomes—to open up the government. I reject that, and I will vote no to that. And the demands you are making grow every day. You are overplaying your hand, and you are hurting people. Stop it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. HUSTED. Madam President, as you well know, I am the new guy here. In the past, I watched government shutdowns from afar. They never made sense to me. And now I am seeing one up close, and I can confirm that government shutdowns are senseless. And this one seems to be one of the most senseless ones of all.

But what is it about? Why, for 38 days, would the government be shut down? Well, I know this, on day one, I sat in this Chamber, listened to the majority leader JOHN THUNE explain to our Democrat colleagues: Open the government, and we will negotiate on any priorities you want to discuss.

So that has been, those have been the ground rules from day one. It sounded fair to me. It seems like that is a fair way to do it, but, apparently, that was not good enough for my Democrat colleagues. Some of them said that the shutdown was necessary to provide leverage to get the policies they wanted to, and they needed to stand up to President Trump.

Well, congratulations. Congratulations for setting the record for the longest government shutdown in American history. Hope you are proud.

But it came at an enormously expensive price, very, very high price, and who is paying that high price? It came at the expense of your constituents, that is who. That is who is paying the price for the government shutdown.

And the reality is this, though. President Trump was elected, overwhelmingly, by the majority of Americans just a year ago. He will be in office for 3 more years. I know that for many of my colleagues, they don't like that prospect, but that is reality. That is how we do this in America, we elect Presidents every 4 years, and he was elected, overwhelmingly, by the American people.

So I certainly hope, in standing up to him, you do not intend to keep the government shut down for 3 more years, for the process that you are using to gain leverage through your record-long government shutdown is at the price of the American people. They are the ones that are suffering from this, not the people in this Chamber—the American people.

They are the collateral damage for your leverage. That is who is paying the price for the political gain. And who are the they? Who are the "they" that are paying this price?

Well, they are SNAP beneficiaries who don't know if they will be able to afford food. They are the TSA agents and air traffic controllers who are missing paychecks, some of them having to take other jobs. Probably some of them will soon need to resign because they won't be getting a paycheck, and they will need to find some way to put food on the table.

And what is the result of that? Flights being canceled. It is disrupting lives of American people all around the country. That is the price of trying to gain leverage. Congratulations.

The Capitol Police that protect this place and all of you, they are part of paying the price for this. They are going unpaid while they still remain on the job. The staff in this Chamber, the staff that serves all of you to keep the floor open, to keep the clocks running on time, they pay the price. They are going without pay.

I talked to a small business owner the other day who can't get their loan from the SBA. Small business owners are paying the price. And when they pay the price, so do their employees. In my own State of Ohio, 8,000 civilian employees were furloughed from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, the people that protect our country. They are paying the price for your leverage. These are real people, not bargaining chips.

They have real jobs. They have important things they do to serve our country. They are not bargaining chips for your political leverage.

Republicans have voted time and time again to reopen government, cleanly, responsibly, and without games—the same thing that we asked you to do. I have voted 14 times. My colleagues and I on this side of the aisle have voted 14 times to reopen the government. It is not unprecedented to pass a clean CR to reopen the government. In fact, during the Biden administration, when Republicans didn't run this Chamber, they compromised with Democrats and voted 13 times to pass a clean CR to keep the government open, the same thing we have asked you to do 14 times, and you said no.

There is a way forward right now though. We can pass a funding bill today—today—get workers paid, keep America running, and then pair it with the firm commitment that has been given to debate and vote on the policies that divide us.

That is how grownups govern, by the way. That is how grownups are supposed to do this. We don't always get our way. We debate it; we fight for our values; and we vote. And sometimes we win, and sometimes we lose. That is what the majority leader of this body JOHN THUNE, who is a man of his word, has said he would do.

My Democrat colleagues say they don't want to give up their leverage in funding government until all of their demands are met. But let's be abundantly clear, it is not Republicans. It is not Republicans that you are hurting with this strategy. It is the American people, the American taxpayer, the American taxpayer that is paying for a government that is not serving them. They are the ones. They are the ones that your strategy is hurting.

And I say this with all sincerity. I want to offer a perspective because, yes, I am fired up about this. I am frustrated by it. I think it is wrong, but I want to fix it. So I want to offer this perspective.

If leverage was your goal, you got as much leverage now as you are ever going to get. It is never going to get better than this. The shutdown has lasted 38 days. Do you really think you will have more leverage after 48 days or 58 days? You won't.

It is just a matter of how much more suffering you will cause until it comes to an end. When will enough be enough? How much suffering must occur before you decide to vote with us to open up the government?

I am not asking you to abandon your principles. I would never do that. Everybody here stands on their principles. They argue. They fight for what they want. I would never ask you to abandon your principles.

If you want to defend Biden's COVID-era bonuses that prop up a broken ObamaCare system, then keep fighting, if that is what you believe. It is not working.

You can propose your own legislation—which I would prefer that you propose some bipartisan legislation that the majority leader of this Chamber, I believe, will take up to vote. It is time for you to take yes for an answer to work with us to solve these problems.

I wasn't here, neither was the Presiding Officer, when all the ObamaCare legislation was passed, nor was I here when the Democrats voted to set an expiration date of 2025 for the subsidies that they now say they want to renew. They set the expiration date.

But I am here now. I want to fix it. I want to get some results. But those policies, those ObamaCare policies, have contributed to increasing healthcare costs that are the biggest driver of inflation in the 21st century.

Look at this chart. This is the cost of consumer goods, services, that have increased from 2000 to 2024. Hospital service is No. 1, medical services on this chart. Healthcare inflation is the most dramatic form of inflation that this Nation has experienced in the 21st century, and it is due to ObamaCare policies.

Those are the facts, and that is the reality. I didn't create the problem. Many people in this Chamber didn't create the problem. But I want to help solve the problem. I want to reduce the cost of healthcare.

When the government shutdown ends, I am happy to be one of the people that works on solving the problem that others created. We want to fix this. We want people to be able to afford healthcare, but the way we do that is to drive down the costs.

I want to work with anyone in this Chamber that will change that, to eliminate the fraud that has filled up this ACA system, to target the benefits to those who truly need them, and to create an insurance market that doesn't rely on endless taxpayer subsidies—create something that works, reduce the cost of providing healthcare in this country.

And I say this: For the love of God and country, stop making the American people suffer while we wait to do this. Bring it to an end. Open the government.

Let's work together to reduce the cost of healthcare and make it more affordable, because the truth is, you have no more leverage today than you did on day one. In fact, you have less, because there is less time to negotiate the items you claim to care about. There is less time today to negotiate it than when this all started.

So it is a matter of urgency. Let's get this done. Let's get the government open, and let's get to work.

It is the longest government shutdown in American history. We can't change what happened in the past 38 days, but we can change the future. We can end this today. Right now, today, we can end this. Let's get back to work.

The American people expect their leaders to solve problems, not to stage them, not to create them, which is what has happened during this government shutdown. It is long past time to reopen the government, to restore trust, and to prove that the Senators in this Chamber can lead. That is the question that needs to be resolved, and it needs to be resolved today. It is time to reopen the government.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

EXPRESSING CONDEMNATION OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY'S PERSECUTION OF RELIGIOUS MINORITY GROUPS

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I rise today to speak about a grave matter and a clear violation of religious freedom, human dignity, and the rule of law.

In China, Christians are fighting daily for their religious freedom against the Chinese Communist Party. And on October 10, 2025, the Chinese Communist Party launched the largest coordinated nationwide crackdown in more than four decades against a Christian urban house church in China.

In that sweep, 23 pastors and church members of the Zion Church, one of China's largest underground congregations, were arrested and wrongfully detained, including Pastor Ezra Jin.

Pastor Jin and the members of the Zion Church were not engaged in violence. They were worshiping. They were serving God. And for that action, they are being treated as enemies of the communist state.

Last week, I introduced a bipartisan, bicameral resolution to condemn the abduction of Pastor Jin and the Zion Church leaders and to demand their immediate release. This resolution is designed to pressure Chinese leadership to release the congregation members and to let them practice their Christian faith freely. It sends a message that faith is not a crime, and a government that fears its citizens' faith is nothing more than an oppressive tyranny.

Pastor Jin's daughter and her husband Bill, a native Houstonian, wrote about the CCP's persecution in the Washington Post this past week. In their column, they made a piercing observation, and I want to share it here in full:

There were few more obvious ways to showcase the bankruptcy of an ideology—and the vitality of the Christian faith—than by forcing peaceful believers to suffer for the sake of their convictions.