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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, November 10, 2025, at 12 noon.

Senate

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2025

The Senate met at 1:30 p.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.

Our Father in Heaven, thank You that we see You in the world around us, beholding the works of Your fingers in the earth, sea, and sky. Your everlasting mercies sustain us, enabling us to accomplish more than we can ask or imagine.

Guide our lawmakers as they seek to set the captives free by reopening our government. Lord, inspire them to honor You by bringing help to the helpless, hope to the hopeless, and joy to those in despair. Keep our legislators patient in debate, charitable in judgment, and slow to anger, as they seek to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States of America against all enemies.

We pray in Your strong 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 PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). 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 bill by title.

The 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. THUNE. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor today because we are

now in the middle of November, and we know that we have open enrollment in our healthcare plans, and we have consumers trying to make choices. We need to give them clarity that we can help drive down the costs.

As somebody who worked very hard on the Affordable Care Act—on one provision that was different than the exchanges, the basic health plan—I can tell you that this plan has been successful at making a market for consumers at the low end of the market, above the Medicaid rate but up to 200 percent of the Medicaid rate, and providing them with affordable insurance through something called the basic health plan. It is in four States and soon to be in the District of Columbia.

If you think about it, an individual buying on the exchange would probably have to spend about \$9,500 to get an equitable silver plan, but these individual States purchasing on behalf of bundles of their constituents are only paying \$6,000 for that same plan on an annual basis.

So what are we doing? We are basically making a market. I say it is like going to Costco. If you buy in bulk, you get a discount. If you allow these States to buy on behalf of a large pool of their constituents who can't make a market on their own, you obviously can get a discount.

I am very interested in our continuing and saving Federal dollars and delivering good healthcare on something called the basic health plan. So I was not surprised that yesterday or in the last few days, the world—in DC, anyway, and around the country—has erupted into this debate about how do

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



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we make healthcare more affordable—that is exactly right—and how do we make sure that Big Insurance doesn't just capitalize.

Now, all of a sudden, both sides of the aisle are talking about insurance companies making the money and how we drive down the costs. I appreciate that, and I welcome the chance to talk to any of my colleagues.

In fact, I saw that the Wall Street Journal had a column today basically saying:

Republicans Pitch Alternative to ACA Extension to End the Government Shutdown.

I was glad to see that. I thought that was a great alternative. I don't know how much of it was just discussed at your lunch or how many of these ideas of making healthcare more affordable were discussed, but I definitely think this particular idea by my colleague Senator CASSIDY has merit, only because I think the Senator on the Finance Committee, along with myself and the chairman of the HELP Committee, has tried to look at ways to make healthcare more affordable, and it deserves some fair consideration.

This idea is really something called a health reimbursement account. Since 2008, health reimbursement accounts have been a critical component of one State's Medicaid Program, the Healthy Indiana Plan in the State of Indiana. Today, over 800,000 Indiana Medicaid enrollees automatically have access to these accounts and are using them to lower their medical expenses. The State of Indiana pays for the first \$2,500 in healthcare costs, which covers a large portion of their insurance plan's out-of-pocket expenses, but the enrollees make monthly contributions, depending on their costs, to upgrade their healthcare coverage to more generously include things like vision and dental benefits.

One of the biggest benefits of the Indiana health reimbursement account is that the program encourages good financial management and the use of preventive care, like annual checkups.

Currently, if an enrollee spends less than the \$2,500 in medical costs and in using preventive care, they can roll over their remaining account to the next year to lower their monthly medical expenses. This has been a proven path to promoting responsible and measured healthcare spending. It also encourages, as I mentioned, the use of preventive care.

We all know we need to drive down costs in the long run.

What happens when we don't have good health insurance and as we see November and December coming without a real plan for millions of Americans to buy affordable insurance, we are just going to drive up the costs of uncompensated care. The Affordable Care Act has lowered the amount of uncompensated care and helped us lower the cost of insurance overall, but we need to keep going, and we need to do more.

So I think that these health reimbursement accounts proposed by my

colleague Senator CASSIDY—I hope this article in the Wall Street Journal is serious, that Republicans are interested in floating this idea—and the Affordable Care Act Marketplace coverage have a variety of ways in which we all can take part in a conversation to drive down the costs of care.

The health reimbursement accounts are already in place in Indiana, here in our Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, and also in the DC Health exchange. So it is not as if there is only one place that is doing this. In those instances, it is a voluntary program. People can voluntarily comply, voluntarily decide to take the program up and participate in it and, as I said, get involved in better healthcare decisions and better timeliness of these decisions.

I have no idea what is going to happen here today, but I know this: There is enough time to talk about good ways to lower the costs of healthcare, particularly for this population that has to make benefit decisions right now. Lower these costs, implement this, and get our government back open.

I hope that people will give serious consideration to what my colleague Senator CASSIDY and others have talked about in this very important area of driving down the costs of care. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today is the 40th day of the government shutdown. It has been so long that a recap is in order.

As I have said before, Iowans don't plan their lives around what we do here in Congress, but the Democrats' failure to support a clean, bipartisan funding bill has caused pain, suffering, and uncertainty for the American people.

Let's remember: It is the Democrats who caused the shutdown and got us into this mess. All but three Democrats have repeatedly voted against a clean continuing resolution to fund government Agencies and programs even at Biden-era levels. They won't even support funding that Democrats had voted for and supported for the last 4 years prior to Trump's reelection.

All we need are five more Democrats.

There are not any partisan policy priorities from either side. That is why we call it a clean government funding resolution. Republicans, by supporting this continuing resolution, have sought to put partisan politics aside to keep the government open for the American people while the Appropriations Committee members hash out full-year appropriations bills under what we call regular order.

Obviously, for the last 40 days, the taxpayers of this country and every citizen have seen demonstrated daily that Democrats have had plans other than just a clean funding resolution. They have not put their policy priorities to the side. They have taken the American people hostage by refusing to vote for government funding unless it has included their partisan priorities.

At the top of their list is an extension of the Biden-era COVID subsidies for ObamaCare. Understand that what we are talking about was instituted because we had a COVID shutdown of government, and people were hurt because the government decided in early 2020, at the beginning of the COVID pandemic, that 22 million people should be put on the unemployment rolls. That is what happens when the government shuts down the economy.

So this is a subsidy that Democrats decided to sunset at the end of this year. Now the Democrats have shut down the government to continue what was meant to be a temporary program. Something we have learned from the word "temporary" program or "temporary" taxes is that everybody soon decides temporary becomes permanent.

These expanded subsidies that go back to the beginning of the COVID era go to big insurance companies for Americans over 400 percent of the Federal poverty level. Can you believe it? What I mean when I say "over 400 percent of the poverty level" is that it could include people making over \$600,000 a year.

I want to make clear, this expiration is only about the expanded, temporary COVID subsidies. So to everybody else who depends on the subsidy for ObamaCare, I want to make it very clear to them that the premium subsidies for individuals and families under 400 percent of the Federal poverty level that existed prior to COVID are permanent law. Those people will not be affected because that permanent law is not being changed by anything we are debating here today—permanent law; no change for those under 400 percent of poverty.

Writing healthcare policy is our job—meaning the Senators' job and the House of Representatives' job. However, every one of us in this body knew that this deadline that we are talking about was approaching, and we had already made plans to address the policy issues later in the year. Yet, as we have found out now for the last 40 days, that timeline was not satisfactory to the Democrats.

I have been in elected office a long time. Taking the government hostage and shutting it down is always a losing proposition. It costs money to shut the government down, and it costs money to open the government up, and we find out little is accomplished. In the process, the government is supposed to be in service to the American people. When there are 700,000 Federal employees sitting at home who are probably going to be paid because they always have been paid, they can't serve the American people, and the government is not doing its job.

In my view, this shutdown was doomed from the start, but Democrats marched forward anyway, following their leaders into the mess that we now have had for the last 40 days.

On day 38—2 days ago, so 38 days after the government shut down—Leader SCHUMER came to the Senate floor

and unveiled his big plan. On day 38, he came with the Democrats' first plan to get the American people out of this government shutdown.

Why would he wait 38 days? Why would he wait?

If you were serious about a bipartisan solution to lower the cost of healthcare for the American people, I don't believe you would sit idle for 38 days before making an offer.

I have shared the pain the shutdown has inflicted upon Iowans, but it bears repeating. I have families calling my office asking where they can get food. Our food banks are overrun as Thanksgiving is just a few weeks away.

I want to give you an example that was reported by the person behind this constituent in the checkout line. One of my constituents, while grocery shopping in Walmart in Marion, IA, was left with no groceries for her family when she found out at the cash register that her food stamps were not on her debit card. That kind of uncertainty has real-world impacts.

The realization brought this constituent to tears, it was reported to me. And why wouldn't you go into tears?

Let's just take a moment to think about how you would feel coming home emptyhanded from the grocery store and the stress it inflicts on families. Perhaps your kids are crying because they are hungry.

Young farmers can't get their loan money from the Department of Agriculture during this government shutdown. These young farmers are already in an ag economy that is underwater. How are they going to keep their business going?

Then, I don't know what percentage of the American public flies every day, but it is significant that flights are being canceled left and right because air traffic controllers aren't being paid. That means people who are trying to get to a sick family member or attend a sister's wedding may not make it on time.

Law enforcement, including our own Capitol Police whom we rub shoulders with every day here, are working overtime and not being paid.

The entire Federal workforce is not being paid—3 million people who have families and bills to pay.

Those are just four or five examples. Unfortunately, the list could go on.

I often say Washington, DC, right where we are standing now—this town and the people who are in it—live and work in an island surrounded by reality.

I have been begging Leader SCHUMER to give just five Democrats the go-ahead to join us in a commonsense clean funding bill.

Let me remind you that Democrats voted for this same structure of a clean funding resolution at least 13 times during the 4 years of President Biden. So I would ask them: What is wrong with voting for a clean funding resolution during this year and during this shutdown or to prevent this shutdown?

The answer is, The American people elected a new President, and that President is not a Democrat. Well, elections have consequences. In a democratic republic, the will of the people is exercised by voters, and congressional leaders must respect that and live with the consequences.

It is past time the Democrat leaders cut loose their Members who want to work in a bipartisan way.

Iowans at my town meetings want more bipartisanship out of Washington. They are cynical that all we do is fight and nothing ever gets done. I tried to educate them on how it is not as bad as what they see on TV, and Senators really do want to legislate and serve the American people.

So let's roll up our sleeves and get the job done. The American people deserve better.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CURTIS). The Senator from Kansas.

VETERANS' COMPENSATION COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT OF 2025

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I have introduced legislation, as is introduced on an annual basis. We have done so again this year to make certain that the rate of disability compensation and other financial benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans and military survivors keeps pace with the rate of inflation.

The annual Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2025 will increase certain VA benefits by 2.8 percent, including disability compensation, clothing allowances, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children. That is to better reflect the changes in the everyday cost of living and align with the annual benefit increase by the Social Security Administration.

This adjustment allows veterans and their families to have the peace of mind of knowing that their VA benefits will keep up with our Nation's economy and that the VA can continue delivering support for those who have served while alleviating the stress of financial uncertainty due to circumstances that are out of their control.

In addition to the Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs has also reported out Senator ROSEN's—the Senator from Nevada—Lactation Spaces for Veteran Moms Act, which would make certain that each VA medical center has an appropriate space for veteran moms to pump or to breastfeed.

Women veterans are the fastest growing patient demographic, and we must make certain that VA facilities can meet their needs.

Mr. President, I, therefore, ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 202, S. 2392.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2392) to increase, effective as of December 1, 2025, the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Mr. MORAN. I ask unanimous consent, then, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 2392) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 2392

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2025".

SEC. 2. INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) RATE ADJUSTMENT.—Effective on December 1, 2025, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase, in accordance with subsection (c), the dollar amounts in effect on November 30, 2025, for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation under the provisions specified in subsection (b).

(b) AMOUNTS TO BE INCREASED.—The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to subsection (a) are the following:

(1) WARTIME DISABILITY COMPENSATION.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1114 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.—Each of the dollar amounts under section 1115(1) of such title.

(3) CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.—The dollar amount under section 1162 of such title.

(4) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO SURVIVING SPOUSE.—Each of the dollar amounts under subsections (a) through (d) of section 1311 of such title.

(5) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO CHILDREN.—Each of the dollar amounts under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

(c) DETERMINATION OF INCREASE.—Each dollar amount described in subsection (b) shall be increased by the same percentage as the percentage by which benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) are increased effective December 1, 2025, as a result of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

(d) SPECIAL RULE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons under section 10 of Public Law 85-857 (72 Stat. 1263) who have not received compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 3. PUBLICATION OF ADJUSTED RATES.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register the amounts specified in section 2(b), as increased under that section, not later than the date on which the matters specified in section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42