

of the Democrat party are supporting historically bad nominees or something else is going on here, and I think we know what that is. That something else that is going on here looks a lot like petty partisanship. Maybe you want to call it Trump derangement syndrome.

Democrats and their base still can't deal with the fact that President Trump won last November, and so they have held up every single one—every single one—of his nominations in revenge. But Republicans have not been daunted. We have just continued plowing ahead on nominations, helping us rack up a historic number of votes, this year, in the process.

And in September, we took steps to restore Senate precedent and codify in Senate rules what was once understood to be standard practice, and that is the Senate's acting expeditiously on largely noncontroversial Presidential nominees to allow a President to get his team in place. Now, both Democrat and Republican Presidents will be protected from some of the partisan excesses that we have seen from Democrats this year.

Mr. President, 2025 has been a long road, but I am very proud to be able to say, at the end of it, that we are well on our way to confirming more than 400 of the President's civilian nominees and that we have virtually cleared the nominations backlog by the end of his first year, in contrast to the situation, at this point, in President Trump's first term and President Biden's.

And when the Senate returns in January, I look forward to continuing to confirm additional members of the President's team so that he can continue to do the job to which he was elected by the American people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### HEALTHCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today, I am announcing that Senate Democrats will introduce legislation for a clean, 3-year extension of the current ACA tax credits. This is the bill—a clean, 3-year extension of ACA tax credits—that Democrats will bring to the floor of the Senate for a vote next Thursday, and every single Democrat will support it.

Republicans have 1 week to decide where they stand: Vote for this bill and

bring healthcare costs down, or block this bill and send premiums skyrocketing.

That is what is at stake when we vote next week. It is going to be one of the most important votes we take because it is showing who is on the side of the American people and lowering their healthcare costs and who is on the side of the big special interests and is going to allow them to raise healthcare costs for America. People back home will be watching what Republicans do, and the American people are running out of time before January 1.

Make no mistake, our bill is the last chance Republicans will get before January 1 to prevent premiums from skyrocketing. Republicans have no hope of solving this healthcare crisis on their own. They have no healthcare plan of their own whatsoever. They are far too divided. Americans can't help but notice that when Leader THUNE came to the podium a few minutes ago, he didn't even talk about healthcare because he has nothing to say. They can't even come up with their own bill.

The only path next week is supporting our bill. While Democrats are united in fighting for the American people, Republicans are too busy fighting amongst themselves. They can't even come up with their own plan. Republicans have spent more time kicking low-income people off health insurance and raising costs for those who stay covered than on doing anything to lower premiums. They have riddled their plan with poison pills that would ban abortion nationwide.

For those Republicans talking about sending checks, how is a one-time check supposed to last the whole year? People are paying more every day for the things they need, and a single check in the mail is cold comfort if you are paying \$1,000 or \$5,000 more a month just for health insurance.

So the reality is this. The reality is simply this: The easiest, most direct way, the simplest way to solve this premium crisis is for Republicans to vote for our bill. Any Republican who claims to care about premium increases on January 1 has only one realistic path, and that is to support our bill for a simple, clean, 3-year extension.

If Republicans block our bill, there is no going back. We won't get another chance to halt these premium spikes before they kick in at the start of the new year. Those insurance premiums in January will land like a hammer blow on the American people. The pain will fall on all Americans but heaviest in the Republicans' own backyards. They don't even care about their own constituents.

As election results have shown in November, this past week, and in many other instances, the American people are beginning to learn Republicans don't care that costs are going through the roof for the average American family.

Americans with chronic illnesses will suffer if we don't extend the credits. Rural communities will be devastated. People who get insurance through their jobs will see their costs go up too. This isn't just affecting ACA people.

We can avoid all of this needless pain if just a handful of Republicans join us in passing our bill—join us in passing our bill. Or are they going to continue the Republican war on healthcare, on reducing healthcare costs, and block getting better healthcare for the American people.

For the last 30 years, Republicans have been fighting, but now this fight is coming to a head because the failure to extend these premiums will hit so hard—harder than anything that has hit the American people in the last while.

Democrats have made clear where we stand. Now that our proposal is out, Republicans have 1 week to pick a side: Join us and prevent premiums from skyrocketing, or block our bill and condemn people, the American people, to financial disaster. The choice is up to the Republicans here in the Senate.

#### SIGNALGATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on Signalgate, today, a Pentagon watchdog will release a new report on Signalgate finding that Secretary Hegseth put the lives of American troops at risk by sharing sensitive operational information on a group chat in flagrant disregard of security proposals. Secretary Hegseth has put the lives of American troops at risk. The conclusion that this report points to is damning. The Secretary of Defense's lack of judgment put the lives of our troops in danger.

Instead of accepting responsibility for his mistakes as any real leader would do, the Secretary has remained defiant, has mocked this incident, and has tried to label this as a witch hunt—as a witch hunt.

Pete Hegseth has a clear MO: He puts himself first at the expense of our men and women in uniform, and when he screws up, he tries to hide the truth. That is his MO—putting himself first and then hiding the truth.

This new report, just like the boat strikes in the Caribbean, points to a growing pattern: When Hegseth has the chance to make himself look good, look tough, he will talk a big game—try to seem tough. He will go on TV and make big speeches. But when he makes mistakes or faces any adversity, he throws others under the bus without a second thought.

This guy does not belong as Secretary of Defense. In the 10 months on the job, Pete Hegseth has demonstrated clear defects of character that we cannot afford in a Secretary of Defense.

I ask my Republican colleagues: How can we trust this man to keep our troops safe when it is clear that he isn't able to even keep sensitive information safe? How can we trust the

word of a man who will change his story or shift blame or hide the truth at the drop of a hat? The answer is, we cannot trust him.

Pete Hegseth is not qualified to serve as Secretary of Defense. Our brave troops need much better than Pete Hegseth.

#### NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today, on nominations, Republicans will move forward with a Trojan horse of a nominee package, confirming in one fell swoop a slew of horribly unqualified, shockingly radical nominees.

All year long, Senate Republicans have bent the knee to Donald Trump, giving him every nominee he has asked for, no matter how unqualified, no matter how unfit they are, no matter how bad this nominee package is. It is much different than any nominee package we have seen.

Democrats oppose these people, as you will see in a minute, because they are just totally unqualified to be in the important positions he is trying to place them in. No wonder the Republicans didn't want to have votes on these people, didn't want to have discussion, because when the American people learn who they are, they are aghast that these types of people would be appointed.

So, yes, Democrats want votes. We want least an hour or two of discussion to fill these important positions.

Leader THUNE said, oh, we are just doing this for partisan political reasons. Here is what he said exactly. He said: Democrats must be doing one of two things. THUNE said: Either the President has been nominating historically bad nominees, or Democrats are simply being partisan.

Well, Speaker THUNE, Leader THUNE, that is obvious, Leader THUNE: It is that Donald Trump is nominating historically bad nominees. That is why we are doing this.

I mean, there are so many. I could spend hours on the floor talking about them. But let me mention a few, just a few, and when you hear what is going on, America, you will be aghast.

Look at the nomination of Sara Bailey to serve as Director of National Drug Control Policy. They are trying to sneak this one through. Of course they would be afraid of a discussion or a vote or who she is coming to light. Bailey has no background in medicine, no background in public health, no background in law enforcement. She is so radical—Bailey is—that even FOX News's news shows banned her.

But do you know what she has going for her? why she was nominated for an important position with no experience? She said the January 6 rioters were "good Americans." That was her ticket to getting this job. All you have to do is tell Donald Trump he was right about January 6, even though he was so obviously wrong and dangerous in what he did then. But all you have to do is

tell him "Oh, they were good Americans," and that is good enough for Donald Trump. And now Senate Republicans have gone down to his level, and it is good enough for them.

Republicans are also trying to sneak through people like Anthony D'Esposito to be the inspector general—the watchdog—of the Department of Labor. This is a former Member of the House who put his mistress on his congressional payroll and has faced a slew of misconduct allegations as a police officer. That is not anyone's definition of a good watchdog—unless you are Senate Republicans. Someone who faced misconduct allegations and put his mistress on the payroll is now the watchdog at the Department of Labor? Give me a break.

Of course they want to hide these nominees. They are embarrassed about them. They know that Donald Trump has the lowest standard of any President we have ever seen for qualifications to important positions.

There is John Bartrum, who Republicans want to appoint as Under Secretary for Health at the Department of Veterans Affairs. What is his claim to fame? He was instrumental in firing VA staff, tearing up VA contracts, and politicizing VA research.

That is just three. There are so many more that are just appalling. Yeah, we Democrats of course want to see votes on these nominees. We don't want to allow them to just be all voted yes in a big package so their lack of qualification, their lack of honor, their lack of honesty, their past records can be hidden.

But Republicans are ashamed—ashamed—of who they have to vote for.

They should vote against these nominees, but they are afraid of Donald Trump. It is very clear what Republicans are doing. They are trying to pull a fast one on the American people and sneak through an entire henhouse of bad nominees without giving them the scrutiny that the American people demand.

You know, when you choose bad nominees, you pay a price. Trump picked Hegseth for Secretary of Defense, whom I talked about a few minutes ago. He had no qualifications to be Secretary of Defense. The only way he got through was arm-twisting from some Republicans who knew he shouldn't be in that position, and now Trump and the administration and Senate Republicans who voted for him are paying a price because it is so obvious he is screwing up left and right.

When you put in these bad nominees, you sneak them through or bludgeon them through, the administration and, unfortunately, the American people pay a very significant price. This nominee package is a perfect symbol of what this majority has been about from day one: bowing to Donald Trump, rubberstamping his unqualified loyalists, and chipping away at the Senate's role as a check on a highly abusive Executive.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call in relation to Executive Calendar No. 3, S. Res. 520.

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

#### HEALTHCARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, you just heard the minority leader. He came to the floor, and he said that the Democrats want a 3-year extension—3 full years—for Biden's COVID bonus payments with absolutely no change to the law; not a single reform to deal with the waste, the fraud, the abuse, and the corruption of these payments from ObamaCare, not a single one. They want to send billions of dollars—actually, it is likely to be \$100 billion—directly from the U.S. Treasury to insurance companies. Insurance companies are highly profitable, and that is their position: just send more U.S. dollars to insurance companies, just do a direct transfer of money.

Should I remind him—does he need to be reminded that the COVID problems are over? But they want to send another \$100 billion of Biden COVID bonus payments directly to insurance companies.

Remember, the Democrats shut down the Government of the United States for 43 days because of healthcare, because of ObamaCare. Actually, they wanted, at one point, to give money to illegal immigrants for healthcare. That was part of their demands, free healthcare for illegal immigrants, shut down the government, deny the American people the services they need, transportation, all of those things.

Think of the damage they did to the economy, the damage they did to the country by forcing the American people—43 days of the politics of pain and now the ongoing pain of having to live under ObamaCare with this failed healthcare system that we are living with today.

ObamaCare is a program that undermined healthcare in America. Democrats are saying they want to talk about ObamaCare. Let's talk about what has happened for the last 15 years. I am a doctor. I practiced medicine for 24 years in Wyoming before coming to the U.S. Senate. The Democrats refused to tell the American people—refused to even admit it to themselves, living in denial—that ObamaCare is broken, and it broke