

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY,
DECEMBER 11, 2025

Mr. BARRASSO. I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 9:30 a.m., Thursday, December 11; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 285, S. 3386; further, notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture motions filed during Tuesday's session ripen at 11:30 a.m., and following the cloture vote on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 284, S. 3385, the Senate proceed to executive session to resume consideration of Executive Calendar No. 4, S. Res. 532; finally, I ask that the postcloture time be expired, the Senate vote on adoption of the resolution, and if adopted, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and 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.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order following the remarks of Senators Cantwell and Markey.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I have come to the floor tonight to talk about a few issues. Literally, I thought I was going to come and talk about healthcare and the need for us to come together to help reduce healthcare costs and to continue to fight to make sure Americans are covered because covering them helps reduce all our costs when you have the reduction of uncompensated care. But I also wanted to mention a very important safety issue on aviation.

But what I need to say now is really to the State of Washington and to our National Weather Service people. I just got off the phone from our National Weather Service Director for the Pacific Northwest, who was telling me about the extremely dangerous events that are now taking place in the Northwest, with flooding, that we are going to see catastrophic events in at least a couple of our counties, and certainly a lot of damage in the better part of Puget Sound.

So it is very important that the public understand that these rivers, par-

ticularly in Snohomish and Skagit Counties, are going to reach catastrophic levels, literally 4 to 5 feet above the historic mark of these rivers. So this weather event of what is called an atmospheric river, bringing about this much precipitation into our region is going to cause the need for evacuations.

Do not tarry in the evacuation. If evacuations are requested, please comply. These are very drastic situations, and we need the public to understand that. So I am sure you are going to hear a lot more from your local forecasters, your county executives, your emergency response teams, but just know that we are under an unbelievable weather event, and we need to have the public's cooperation.

NATIONAL DEFENSE
AUTHORIZATION ACT

Ms. CANTWELL. I would like to turn now before I get to healthcare, Mr. President, to come to the floor to speak about the National Defense Authorization Act. I see it was just delivered here from the House. I was hoping that our House colleagues would have stopped that legislation and actually made a fix to it. That is section 373, of this year's Defense Authorization Act, which really undermines our critical commercial aviation safety and it exposes the gaps that we saw when we had the January 29 DCA air collision.

So I hope that my colleagues here will help us make changes to this section of the Defense Authorization Act. We know how important this is, the Flight 5342 passenger families, the Lilley family, along with myself and Senator CRUZ, have been trying to sound the alarm bells around the Capitol in the airspace about why we shouldn't let the military fly without this important broadcast system, so that people know when they are in the region and can translate that communication, so that air traffic controllers and other aircraft in a busy airspace know when the military is there.

We know what happened when a Black Hawk involved in the January 29 collision wasn't actively transmitting its location. We know what happened. We know that we have seen since then much from the NTSB. In fact, tonight, a letter from the National Transportation Safety Board is expressing their strong opposition to the inclusion of section 373, in the National Defense Authorization Act. It basically is saying that it significantly reduces the safety of the airspace around Reagan Washington National Airport by allowing the Secretary of the military Department to operate, transmitting its missions to the DCA airspace in a manner that is basically how we got in to the collision to begin with—basically with it not transmitting.

So I don't know why we have to have a letter from the NTSB telling us what we are doing in the National Defense Authorization Act is making the air-

space less safe. I don't even know how this got in the bill because I guarantee you, Senator CRUZ and I didn't approve of this being in the bill. I am pretty sure my colleagues in the House, Congressmen LARSON and GRAVES, didn't approve of this being in the bill. So how is it that this is now in the bill that we all have to respond today, including the National Transportation Safety Board, basically saying this language should not be there.

It is so important, that the families that have had to come together to support legislation that Senator CRUZ and I do support, had to put out their own tweet. They basically said that it doesn't fix the failed system that produced the accident in January. So the families are having to lobby.

So who is not listening? Who is not listening to the ranking members of committees? Who is not listening to the NTSB? Who is not listening to the families of the victims? Who is jamming this into a bill just because they think that DOD still deserves to fly in a crowded airspace without people knowing that they are there?

So I hope my colleagues will take this issue seriously. I hope my colleagues will understand that this is not the way to fix legislation. I mentioned my colleagues, Senator CRUZ, and I have passed the ROTOR Act out of committee, important legislation that does fix the problem, that is endorsed by the families, that is endorsed by the NTSB, that is endorsed by other groups. And yet we couldn't get that into this legislation. But yet, somehow, mysteriously, without anybody knowing how or why, this language is stuck into this bill. Listen to the Lilley family, who lost their son, First Officer Sam Lilley in the crash. They recognize this provision creates another loophole and stated: "Safety that depends on exemptions cannot be the foundation of [a secure] airspace system."

So not only does this provision fail to rein in the training flights properly, it will keep making it more difficult for commercial aircraft to see military training flights flying so close to the flights around DCA.

Now, I will say it is astounding to me that in this last big bill, other stuff was stuck in there, my colleague from the Commerce Committee might realize, that some of our colleagues wanted to be able to sue the Federal Government because the Department of Justice had looked at their phone records. Have we struck that provision?

I am pretty sure these families who have lost loved ones would like to be able to sue the Federal Government, the DOD or the FAA, who basically make it hard to have safety provisions and have somebody in the dark of night put another exemption in for DOD, which is what caused the accident in the first place.

So we don't allow these families to have any recourse with the government, but we are still here with a provision that some Senators thought was

important enough that they get off and can basically sue the government for millions of dollars. And yet this kind of behavior that makes it more dangerous for the flying public, they get no recourse. We don't even know who stuck it in. People should be asking: Who stuck in this language? Who is standing by it? Who is committed to it? Who thinks it is a good idea? Because none of the safety advocates think that it is a good idea. I hope my colleagues will be as outraged as I am, over this provision, outraged, along with the families, with the NTSB Administrator and help us fight this issue.

HEALTHCARE

Ms. CANTWELL. Now, Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to continue to work on the affordable care issues that are facing our Nation. We know that we have to work together to address the Affordable Care Act and that the system needs to continue to have updates.

We know that in this time period since 2010, the uninsured rate in the United States was a staggering 18.2 percent. After the enactment of the ACA, which significantly expanded coverage, around 45 million Americans had access to either Medicaid or the ACA plans—and that is that we actually cut by more than half the uninsured rate to an alltime low in 2023 of 7 percent.

Now, in my home State, we took advantage of the Affordable Care Act and further drove the uninsured rate down to 4 percent, significantly reducing hospitals' and providers' financial burden from providing uncompensated care. So there has much been said about these individual provisions in the Affordable Care Act on the exchange, but the bottom line is—that ability for the Affordable Care Act to drive the uninsured rate in half to an alltime low of 7 percent and 4 percent in my State is a great example of what it did to help lower costs across the whole system.

There are still some challenges on the exchange, and there are more affordable ways to deal with that population on the exchange. I authored one of them called the Basic Health Program. It is now working in three States and soon to be the District of Columbia, and that is definitely thousands of dollars cheaper per year than what you can buy on the exchange. And I would encourage all of us to look at that as a solution for the future.

But according to a report from the Commonwealth Fund, States that expanded Medicaid through the Affordable Care Act saw an average 40-percent decrease in uncompensated care. Another, the Center for Budget and Policy, basically, as this chart shows, found that the Affordable Care Act reduced uncompensated care costs by more than \$6 billion in expansion states.

Just imagine—reduce the cost by \$6 billion by just covering people and not

having this tragedy of uncompensated care. Literally, I have had hospitals tell me that one person can cost millions of dollars by just constantly coming to the hospital. If they would have just had healthcare, had insurance, their costs would have been covered, instead of the constant uncompensated care costs.

So the real challenge here is that since the passage of the ACA, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, the Republicans, have been trying to repeal this bill that cut the uninsured rate in half, provided care that was affordable in the Medicaid expansion and covered other things, as in the basic plan, they tried to repeal all that 70 times—70 times. OK. So I am not surprised that we are days away from a vote, and yet they are still not coming together to show us how they are going to reduce healthcare costs.

We need to keep covering people because covering people is a way to help reduce costs. As I mentioned, the expansion of the Basic Health Program is one way to lower those costs. But I know that in this last big bill passed by my colleagues, they basically cut \$1 trillion from the healthcare system, taking away health insurance from 15 million Americans, raising the healthcare costs and basically creating challenges. I know in one Seattle Times headline, basically, "Washington health care insurers fret as the ACA subsidies remain in limbo." That is because people are following what we are doing—or I should say not doing—and they are trying to understand where they are going to get affordable insurance.

I heard from a woman in Spokane, she has a chronic lung disease and recently fractured her knee. Her premium has gone from \$723 per month to \$2,180 per month. Her only option, a plan with less coverage, has a lower premium, but makes her liable for 30 percent of all hospital and ER payments, making the plan incredibly risky. She is just a year and a half away from qualifying for Medicare, but these massive costs mean she and her husband will have to cut back on groceries and other expenses.

I heard from another constituent in Clark County. She works three jobs, but none of them—none of them provide healthcare. Because of the expiring subsidies, the cost of her basic bronze plan has doubled to \$1,050 per month with a deductible of \$9,000. She is going to an occupational therapy provider for arthritis. But when she got the \$1,000 cost estimate, she canceled.

Another constituent from Long Beach, WA, told me her son has mental health issues, and she helps pay for his housing. But if her premiums go up, she will have to make the difficult decision about getting care for her son or a roof over their head or this issue of premiums.

We know the costs are rising for other things, like groceries, prescription drugs, and other necessities. So

health insurance is going to push people off of a financial stability. If Congress doesn't extend the expiring ACA credits, an estimated 5 million Americans—80,000 Washingtonians—will drop insurance altogether, creating more uncompensated care.

And as I said in the beginning, passing the Affordable Care Act, cutting the uninsured rate in half, was a huge milestone, beyond saving \$6 billion, but making the system healthier and less expensive. So why do my colleagues on the other side of the aisle not understand that we can't just cut, in the Big Beautiful Bill, these important healthcare programs. We can't try to repeal the ACA 70 times and then, all of a sudden, believe that you can just cut people off of the ACA program without trying to provide a more cost-effective solution?

I know my colleagues Senator CRAPO and CASSIDY are trying. My guess is they would like to get a solution here. I thought we should have done it before we opened the government back up because we had the optimal period of time where people were listening to real solutions. Now, we have kind of divided into our corners.

I am very worried that we are not going to get this done when, in reality, we could. We could. We are making things more expensive when we don't need to. Without the extension, millions of Americans will simply choose not to purchase the coverage, and the premiums will, on average, double for the remaining people on the exchange. So that meager \$1,000 to \$1,500 provided by my colleagues, Senators CASSIDY and CRAPO, in health savings accounts is nowhere—nowhere—close to covering the out-of-pocket deductible of a \$7,000 typical associated plan with the health savings accounts.

So I talked to them before, I wanted to work with them in earnest. I thought it was some novelty in certain places like Indiana that was worth exploring. But we cannot take millions of people off of the Affordable Care plan and then say that you are going to give them \$1,000 when we know that their out-of-pocket expenses are going to be \$7,000.

So, as we have all suggested, fix this program, particularly for the very small 5 percent or 6 percent that are at the very high income level, figure out a plan that is more cost effective than what we are providing today, and I am sure—I am sure—we can provide a solution for the American people.

We know now that the cost of hospitalization by people like my constituent in Spokane with chronic conditions like lung cancer or other issues are really worrying the American people. We know that even as we try to get a solution, that people are focusing on abortion restrictions, as if those people in the Affordable Care Act part of the exchange we are talking about are people that were part of this issue. So literally, our colleagues on the other side,