

don't have the providers, that is essentially shutting down healthcare for individuals and people across this country.

I will say my State is working to build out networks and encourage providers to come to Nevada, but we can't do it without critical funding from Medicaid. If Donald Trump cuts Medicaid, one of the first things my State will have to do is cut payment rates for healthcare providers, which will make our shortage of providers even worse, and it will disincentivize providers coming to live and work in Nevada. The ripple effect it will have on my State's economy will be disastrous. We just can't let this happen. This is going to affect Americans in every State across the country.

We have to come together as a Congress and protect our working families from Donald Trump's billionaire tax cuts, and that includes voting no on RFK, Jr., whom Trump handpicked to lead HHS because he knew Mr. Kennedy wouldn't do a thing to stop him.

With RFK running our Department of Health and Human Services, it is not just Medicaid that is in danger; Trump also wants to dismantle the Affordable Care Act. As we all may remember, he has concepts of a plan to do just that, but let's talk about what that means.

Before the ACA, if you were an adult with no dependents, even if you were low-income, you had no access to Medicaid. Unless your employer provided health insurance, you had none. Now, thanks to the ACA, more people than ever before can get the healthcare they need. Over the last 11 years, that has amounted to 20 million low-income adults enrolling in affordable, quality healthcare coverage through Medicaid. This has been a huge gift to our economy.

Think of it this way: If you were an adult who had a chronic illness that kept you from working, you didn't used to have access to health insurance, but because of the ACA, you can now get the care and treatment you need and get back into the workforce.

The ACA has helped Medicaid support our workers to boost our healthcare workforce, and it has made us a stronger and healthier nation. But, once again, Donald Trump wants to roll this expansion of Medicaid back and strip healthcare from thousands of Nevadans so he can pay for tax cuts for his elite, billionaire friends.

Well, I don't know about my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, but I have no interest in cutting taxes for the ultrawealthy when we should be cutting taxes for working families. Here is how we can do that: Part of the Affordable Care Act provided tax credits for low-income Nevadans to make their healthcare premiums cheaper and help them afford their insurance. When we passed the bipartisan American Rescue Plan and the Inflation Reduction Act, we made those tax credits available to even more people, especially to those who had been impacted

by the COVID-19 pandemic. But now those tax credits for hard-working families are set to expire at the end of this year.

This would be devastating to Nevada families and small businesses, as 11,000 Nevadans would lose their healthcare coverage. Nevadans who have benefited from these tax credits would see their healthcare premiums go up by \$2,000 a year, on average, and 250,606 small businesses and self-employed workers in Nevada who qualified for these tax credits will see their premiums increase.

I will tell you what: My Republican colleagues in the majority now have a decision to make. Instead of letting these tax credits for working families and small businesses expire and throwing thousands of lives into chaos, they could renew them. It should be simple. Let's come together and prioritize hard-working families and small businesses over billionaires. That is what we were elected to do, and it is what the American people expect of us.

We cannot give our country over to the elite—to the wealthiest people like Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.—who will do whatever President Trump wants him to do to our healthcare system.

My Democratic colleagues and I stand here today and every day ready to continue pushing back against Donald Trump's attacks on Americans' healthcare. Trump can say whatever he wants about not touching Medicaid and making America healthy, but the truth is that he will do whatever it takes to lift up his elite, billionaire friends and then tell you it is for your own good. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., will be just a rubberstamp for that agenda. Because of that, I will be voting no on his confirmation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). The Democratic leader.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, unfortunately and sadly, we are witnessing an alarming abdication of duty from Republicans here in the Senate. The job of the Senate when it comes to nominees is very simple: When a nominee is obviously qualified and experienced, we should consider them seriously even if we don't agree with their political views or ultimately vote for them. But when a nominee comes before the Senate who is obviously unqualified, who is obviously fringe, whose views are obviously detrimental to the well-being of the American people, well, Senators have a duty to reject them and to tell the President to send someone better.

We were faced with one such nominee earlier today in Tulsi Gabbard, and now we are faced with another such nominee right now.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., is not remotely qualified to become the next Secretary of Health and Human Serv-

ices. In fact, I might go further. Robert F. Kennedy might be one of the least qualified people the President could have chosen for the job. It is almost as if Mr. Kennedy's beliefs, history, and background were tailor-made to be the exact opposite of what the job demands.

A few weeks ago, it seemed like maybe Senate Republicans would have drawn the line on nominees like Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., and Tulsi Gabbard, but the past few days have been a stunning capitulation by Senate Republicans. At this point, they are just rubberstamping people no matter how fringe they are.

If the Senate had a secret ballot, I will bet you that Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., would never have come close to confirmation. His unfitness for the job is simply too obvious and too glaring.

HHS is an Agency that depends on science, on evidence, and on impartiality to ensure the well-being of over 330 million Americans. HHS ensures we eat safe food, purchase reliable medications, oversees Medicare benefits, and approves the use of lifesaving vaccines. Most importantly, a good HHS Secretary makes sure the American people have access to affordable, high-quality healthcare.

Mr. Kennedy, unfortunately, is not qualified to oversee any of these things. He is neither a doctor nor a scientist nor a public health expert nor a policy expert of any kind.

If Mr. Kennedy is confirmed given that lack of background, it is my deep fear that he will rubberstamp Donald Trump's war against healthcare, meaning we will see more of the disastrous funding cuts of the past few weeks, meaning that more people will lose health coverage, meaning that the interests of for-profit corporations and Big Pharma will come before the needs of working Americans.

When I saw Mr. Kennedy and asked him certain views, like on abortion, he said: Well, I am going to defer to the President.

On something as personal, as heart-felt, as talked over within ourselves, even, as abortion, he will follow the whims and the wishes of the President? Well, then, how do we know he won't do it on everything else? Even in the places where he might try to tell someone in an interview that he is different than the President, how do we know he won't just follow the President given that he said that on one of the most fundamental views a person can hold?

I am so troubled by this nomination. Already, as we have seen, community health centers across the country have been locked out of the funding they need to serve patients, and I fear it will get worse under RFK, Jr.'s watch. Already, the CDC has gutted valuable public health care data from its websites before the courts stepped in. As we speak, DOGE has basically hacked into the payment data of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which tens of millions of people rely on for secure benefits. I fear all

of that will get worse—worse—under RFK, Jr.'s watch.

Now, it would be bad enough that a vote to confirm RFK, Jr., would be a vote to weaken America's healthcare system, but it gets even worse when you remember that a vote for RFK, Jr., is also a vote to elevate a conspiracy theorist to the top healthcare job in the country.

Mr. Kennedy has made a living not by promoting public health but, in his later years, by actively fighting it. RFK is the face of the modern anti-vax movement. He has spent decades profiting off vaccine misinformation, undermining public trust in a medical practice that has saved tens of millions of lives, if not hundreds of millions or more, for more than a century.

We need to take a moment to truly reckon with the dangers of putting a vaccine skeptic in charge of HHS.

Simply put, weakening vaccine standards could mean more people will die—more people will die. A vaccine skeptic in charge of HHS could defund vaccine awareness campaigns that are led by organizations like the CDC. A vaccine skeptic in charge of HHS could reshape the CDC's vaccine advisory board and alter which kinds of vaccines are required to be covered by insurance companies.

A vaccine skeptic in charge of HHS would make our schools less safe. If fewer kids are required to be vaccinated against things like measles, the results will be sicker classrooms across America.

A vaccine skeptic in charge of HHS could weaken protections for vaccine and drugmakers from frivolous lawsuits.

These are just some of the dangers that come with putting a vaccine skeptic in charge of America's healthcare policy. It will set American healthcare back dramatically.

Of course, during his hearings, RFK, Jr., tried to run away from his fringe views. We heard the usual excuses you might expect from a nominee forced to answer for a terrible record. He suggested perhaps he was misquoted here and there or that he had been misunderstood or that he never meant to come across as anti-vaccine at all, and that, of course, he would follow the science. Well, give me a break. Are Senators supposed to believe that someone who has spent decades writing books and giving speeches and making trips around the world undermining vaccines has suddenly had this epiphany and come around on vaccines; that, suddenly, now that he has been nominated to lead HHS, he is fully on board with vaccines, and that we have nothing to worry about when it comes to his views? How convenient. Again, give me a break.

We should look less at RFK, Jr.'s eleventh-hour conversion and, instead, examine the things he has said again and again, going back decades. We should look at the way RFK, Jr., has used his powerful platform to spread

misinformation for years, like in 2023—not very long ago—when Mr. Kennedy went on FOX News and said:

I do believe autism does come from vaccines.

Or when Mr. Kennedy gave his speech at a conference linking the CDC vaccines division to "fascism."

Or like in 2021, when he said on a podcast:

Our job is to resist and to talk about vaccines to everyone. If I see someone on a hiking trail carrying a little baby and I say to him, "Better not get vaccinated."

And, of course, you could try reading Mr. Kennedy's numerous books against vaccines, like the one claiming parents have been misled on the measles vaccine. Or you could go to the online store of one of his anti-vaccine groups and check out the merchandise they sell for kids, like the onesie that says "Unvaxxed and Unafraid"—a onesie for a little one, putting this propaganda on him or her.

This last example is pretty revealing because it is not just that Mr. Kennedy embraces pseudoscience and conspiracy theories but that he has, in fact, profited off spreading misinformation. He has been involved with no fewer than five lawsuits filed by anti-vaccine groups against drug companies. In fact, his primary source of income from the last year came from the fees he collected by referring clients to a civil lawsuit against vaccines.

And, by the way, he didn't originally disclose those connections to ethics officials. Worse, he refused to give up his financial stake in any settlement agreement that comes from one of these lawsuits. That is stunning.

That means, right now, Republicans are on the brink of confirming a nominee to HHS who will be in charge of vaccine regulations in America and who at the same time stands to benefit from lawsuits against vaccines, financially.

Well, Donald Trump says he wants to get rid of the swamp. This is a textbook definition of "the swamp"—to benefit from lawsuits against vaccines while you are HHS Secretary and have power over which vaccines are needed and how they are distributed and talked about to the American people.

Now, let me repeat what I said a few weeks earlier. It fills me with such sadness, as well as a great deal of frustration and even anger. A few weeks ago, it seemed like Senate Republicans would have drawn the line on nominees like Robert Kennedy and Tulsi Gabbard. A few weeks ago, yes, indeed, it did seem like Senate Republicans, maybe, would have drawn the line on RF Kennedy, Jr., and Tulsi Gabbard. But, unfortunately, and, again, sadly, the past few days have been a stunning capitulation by Senate Republicans.

If the Senate had a secret ballot, I will bet you that Tulsi Gabbard would have gotten fewer than 10 votes and Robert Kennedy would not have come close to confirmation. My guess is a majority of the party on the other side

would have voted against him as well, as are all of us.

But, instead, Donald Trump is tightening his vice grip even further on Senate Republicans. What we are witnessing is leadership from one branch of government, withering under pressure from another, even to the point of confirming dangerously unfit individuals to positions of immense responsibility.

My Republican colleagues should think very carefully before they roll the dice on Mr. Kennedy. There is a very serious risk that, if confirmed, Mr. Kennedy will take steps that severely undermine public health, and then sooner or later public backlash is going to build, and Republicans will have wished they didn't sign their names to this troubling nominee.

So I implore my Republican colleagues, reject the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy to be Secretary of HHS. There are certainly better individuals for the job, even if many on our side may not agree with them politically.

But a vote to confirm Mr. Kennedy is a vote to make America sicker. A vote to confirm Mr. Kennedy is a vote to make America sicker. It is a vote to let pseudoscience dictate healthcare policy. It is a vote that will endanger the lives of the American people. And it is a vote, I truly believe, many, many Republicans will eventually deeply regret.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today alongside Senator SCHUMER and Senator CORTEZ MASTO and so many others who have come to the floor today in opposition to the President's nomination of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., to lead the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services is the top health official in our country and is in charge of everything from preventing disease outbreaks to making sure our kids are healthy and have a good start in life.

Americans need and deserve a Secretary who is guided by facts and science in decision making. After all, this is someone who will be in charge of overseeing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's critical efforts to fight disease outbreaks; the Food and Drug Administration's work to ensure the safety of the medications Americans rely on and the food on our grocery shelves; the National Institutes of Health's ground breaking, life-saving medical research; the Administration for Community Living's support for older adults and people living with disabilities, as well as their families and caregivers; and the Administration for Children and Families' work to oversee the foster care system and child adoption programs—something I care deeply about as a cochair