

the ceiling. I mean, we had people making \$150,000, \$200,000, \$250,000 a year getting Medicaid.

Now, that was the State's fault for not checking. Some people say the States don't have any incentive. That is a cynical view. I prefer not to believe that is true. But they see Medicaid as free money, since the Federal Government is picking up most of the tab.

I prefer not to think that is true, but it is probably true to some extent.

The point is that if our States would do a better job of administering the Medicaid Program and stopping the stealing, we could save \$1.2 trillion, over the next 10 years, to help people reach the point where they don't have to sell blood plasma to go to the grocery store.

You probably think I am going to talk about Minnesota, and I am not. We all know what happened in the Medicaid Program in Minnesota. The State of Minnesota basically declared that Medicaid was an open bar. Just, come on down, and if you want Medicaid and you want the Medicaid money and you want to steal some, you are welcome to it.

I hate to say that, but that is what happened. And I hope every single person who is involved in that stealing up there goes to jail—every single one.

But what I wanted to talk about was—and again, every State has its problem. But some have it worse than others, and one of the ones, besides Minnesota, that seems to have a problem with controlling stealing in the Medicaid Program is California.

Now, California spends an enormous amount of money on Medicaid. They spend about \$220 billion a year. The Fed puts up—the Federal Government, the Federal taxpayer—puts up \$140 billion of that. So the taxpayers that pay money to the Federal Government put up most of the money—not all of it, but most of the money.

How much does the Federal Government put up vis-a-vis the State government? Well, in the ObamaCare portion of Medicaid, the Federal Government puts up 9 bucks. So for every \$1 that the State government puts up for the Medicaid Program, the Federal government puts up \$9—wow.

And some of the public officials in California have started to look at this as free money—just free money. And they don't try to fight the fraud.

Now, how do you stop the fraud?

One thing a State can do is investigate people who claim they are healthcare providers. We saw this as a problem in Minnesota.

If you claim to be a home health provider, you are supposed to have a minimum level of qualification. If you claim to offer—to provide—after-school services, you are supposed to have a certain level of qualification.

I don't think the government—the State government of California—even checks. I mean, we have got every fly-by-night artist in America, it seems, going to California to become a

healthcare provider to get some of the money. And a lot of the times, when they get that money, the money never makes it to the patient. They steal it.

California, for example, has 12 percent of the population. In the last decade, they have been responsible for 50 percent of all of the new healthcare providers formed in America. Most of them are social assistance and so-called healthcare establishments.

And there is an enormous amount of fraud there. We saw that once again in Minnesota, which has been publicized more, where people say: I am now a healthcare provider. Give me the money so I can help people.

You give this fly-by-night healthcare provider money, and they never help anyone.

So that is one way.

The other way that you can control the spending in Medicaid is to be careful about the services you offer. You want to spend the Medicaid money on the people who need it. You want to spend the Medicaid money on people who need it because they are sick. That is why we passed Medicaid.

But States, once again, administer their own Medicaid Programs, and, for the most part, they get to decide which services their Medicaid Program pays for.

Now, supposedly, the Federal Government has to sign off on it. And, clearly, we have got to do a better job there. I will save that topic for another day.

But what got my attention about California, despite the fact that they have thousands and thousands of these fly-by-night, so-called healthcare providers, who the State government of California happily gives money to, and sometimes some of that money gets to a patient, but most of the time it gets into their pocket—what got my attention were the services that California's State government will pay for in its Medicaid Program with money from the Federal Government, which has been provided by the American people.

Here is an example, and this came from an article. This isn't my research. This came from an editorial in the Wall Street Journal—a recent editorial, on May 16, 2026.

In California, under its State government's definition of Medicaid, the California Medicaid Program will pay for Tribal prayers. The California Medicaid Program will pay for exorcisms. The California Medicaid Program will pay for herbal medicines. The California Medicaid Program will pay for meal deliveries. In some cases, the California Medicaid Program will pay for in-home chefs.

Thousands of businesses have popped up in California that literally cater to Medicaid patients.

The Medicaid Program in California will pay for sports club fees. The Medicaid Program in California will pay for a gym membership.

The Medicaid Program in California will actually pay for student loans. They do it under the guise of: Well, we

want to encourage people to become healthcare providers, and they can't do it if they have onerous financial burdens. So we will pay for their healthcare.

Now, once again, Medicaid is supposed to be for sick people. When you are spending other people's money, it is really easy to expand beyond that.

The Medicaid Program in California will pay for scooters. I get that. Sometimes, that might be necessary. Bicycles. But it will also pay for music lessons.

The Medicaid Program in California will also pay for art lessons.

This money didn't just fall from Heaven. We all thank Heaven for it, but it came out of people's pockets. And that is how we end up having \$1.2 trillion, over a 10-year period, stolen from the Medicaid Program—money that was put up by the American people.

It happens in every State. Some are worse than others. Minnesota is an example, but so is California. When you are taking American taxpayer dollars and spending them on an exorcism or a gym membership, something is wrong.

And if we want to lower the cost of living in America, if we want to be able to find the money to give people a tax break, if we want to lower interest rates in America, one of the easiest, best ways to do it is to try to fight the fraud in our Medicaid Program. It is as simple as that.

Mr. President, \$1.2 trillion over 10 years of fraud—this didn't just happen, as you know. This has been going on for a long, long time, and I want to give credit where credit is due.

Dr. Oz, our new CMS Administrator, and the Department of Justice are both working to try to stop this fraud. But it has been there since God was a baby, and it has got to stop now.

That is what I wanted to—it is out in the open, and this is not something I am accusing anybody of unfairly. These are just the facts.

So with that, I thank you for your attention. I thank Kailyn for her great work. And peace out.

I want to thank the Parliamentarian too. She didn't rule me out of order one time. Thank you, Madam Parliamentarian.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Hawaii.

RECONCILIATION

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, a billion dollars goes a very long way, especially in a State like Hawaii. With a billion dollars, we could cover out-of-pocket costs for insulin for every person in the State who relies on it for almost 20 years. We could help to provide healthy meals to women, infants, and children in need for almost 40 years. We could cover the cost of childcare for nearly every child under 3 in Hawaii for an entire year, or we could cover tuition for every instate undergraduate student at the University of Hawaii for close to a decade.

But instead of doing any of that, this week, Republicans plan to give Donald

Trump a billion dollars for, of all things, a ballroom. Now, let's be perfectly clear, I have no problem investing in our great Capital City or its infrastructure. I was the top Democrat on the legislative branch appropriations subcommittee when we provided funding to restore this Capitol's dome.

We are the greatest Nation on Earth, and our physical infrastructure should reflect that. So if you want to clean up the parks or turn on the fountains or restore the monuments, count me in. But that is not what this is. This is not a normal beautification project in the District. This is a President who is about to turn 80 and nearing the end of his political career, and all he can think about is building monuments to himself.

Other leaders in this position might be thinking about their legacy in policy terms, but not this President. He is single-mindedly focused on building ballrooms and arches and golf courses, while the rest of the country struggles to put food on the table or to even see a doctor.

The ballroom started out in Trump's own words as "taxpayer free." I will fund it, he said, I am not going to ask the government for money. A year later, he has realized that he needs government money, taxpayer money. And because the administration lost a court case on the basis that this project was never authorized by Congress, they are now looking for any statute that they can use to defend themselves in the future.

This is a priority for one person and one person only, and I know my colleagues are in a very tough spot because it is their President. They agree with him about a bunch of stuff, and it is really important to him. But I can tell you, I have not met a Republican Senator who likes this idea. I have met lots of them who are going to vote for it anyway.

Why are we spending a billion dollars on a ballroom when gas is at \$4.53 nationally and \$5.64 in Hawaii? What possible justification is there for, on the one hand, ending subsidies that help 22 million Americans to afford healthcare and then turning around and bankrolling a new building just so Donald Trump can throw fancy parties for his rich friends?

And that sounds like something that I am making up, but that is literally what this is. It is a billion-dollar ballroom so he can throw fancy parties for his rich friends. People in Hawaii and all across the country are struggling just to get by. Grocery prices are rising at the fastest rate in years because Trump's war in Iran is driving up shipping and fertilizer costs.

Electricity bills continue to outpace inflation with no end in sight, leaving 1 in 3 Americans struggling to pay their utility bills. More than 900 hospitals, nursing homes, and other facilities are at risk or have already reduced services or shut down altogether because Republicans gutted healthcare

last year; and because of those very same cuts, 1 in 5 Americans who used to get their healthcare through the ACA Marketplace no longer have coverage.

Millions of others are paying thousands more for the same plan. We could be working to solve any of those issues, but we are not.

Now, here is the thing, the way this weird place works is that in order to enact most statutes, you need a combination of Democrats and Republicans. You need 60 votes. However, there is this weird thing called reconciliation where basically twice a year, if it is budgetary, if it adds to the deficit or it reduces the deficit, so spending counts, you get to do something without the other party.

The majority party basically gets to ignore the minority and pass what it wants. And so when we were in power, we used this unique tool to reduce the cost of prescription medicine. We enacted a corporate minimum tax. We took climate action. We gave people cash benefits so they could survive during COVID.

Look, you can argue about what we did or how we did it. That is fine. That is fair. But it certainly reflected the priorities of the day. But given the chance to do the same, you get these two kind of golden tickets where you get to ignore us, you would think that when you are passing major legislation, one of your two big opportunities, that it would address the cost of healthcare or the cost of fuel or the cost of food or the cost of prescription medicine or the cost of gasoline. But they are using this golden ticket, this twice-a-year opportunity to increase funding for ICE at nearly four times their normal levels and give the President a ballroom.

People are struggling everywhere in red States and blue States, but there is not a dime for you in the bill they are about to pass tomorrow, and it is not by accident.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alaska.

DISASTER RELIEF

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, earlier this month, when I was back home in Alaska, I had an opportunity to have a two-part field hearing in my role as the chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. What the committee was seeking to do was to examine the impacts of ex-typhoon Halong. This was a major, major storm that devastated much of western Alaska back in October of 2025. The committee looked to explore the various Federal responses, the mitigation efforts, but also recovery programs that are available for Tribal communities.

As I begin my comments today, I want to acknowledge the ever-present reality of the environmental threats to our coastal western Alaska villages. This has been a problem, a challenge for us for some period of time.

It was 22 years ago that I sat at a different field hearing in Anchorage. It

was convened by Senator Ted Stevens at the time. He was, I believe, chairing the Commerce Committee. We heard testimony about the erosion and the flooding that was affecting coastal Alaska Native villages. Even then—22, 23 years ago—Senator Stevens and I heard about the challenges that were faced by these typically very small, very rural communities in our State. Even back then, many of these communities were considering relocation. It was from that initial field hearing that it was identified, the many threatened communities—threatened by erosion, threatened by permafrost thaw.

So I think it is important to try to understand why we have so many Alaska villages that face this threat. In part, they are in Alaska. We are an Arctic State. We are a State that is seeing the impact of warming more dramatically than any other place in the country. We are also a big, big State. But it also goes back to the way that many Tribal communities were established across the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. We refer to this as the Y-K Delta.

The Native people of that region are largely Yup'ik and Cup'ik people. They were historically nomadic people, and they moved with the seasons. They basically followed the subsistence resource, whether it was the game, whether it was the fish. But when the fall came, which is the time when we see stronger storms, storm surges, they would often move onto higher ground to avoid the worst of the storms' effects.

But history moves forward, and following the purchase of Alaska from Russia and in line with the assimilationist policies of the time, the Bureau of Indian Affairs began to build schools, and this caused families to settle then around the schools. But the settlement locations were not chosen following good feasibility studies or a good, robust cost-benefit analysis. They didn't navigate environmental reviews or work through a lengthy permitting process, nor were they developed in conversation, in consultation with surrounding Native communities whose traditional knowledge about the land may have helped them avoid some ecological hazards.

Then, with the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act; the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, ANILCA; the National Environmental Policy Act, NEPA; and so many of the other laws regarding land ownership and the environment, what we saw were the Yup'ik and the Cup'ik people were largely unable to relocate as they historically might have. As such, over time, many of these small Alaska Native villages have experienced more and greater natural disasters, and some of them have been extremely devastating.

This is where I would like to speak about ex-typhoon Halong. It is now 7 months after this typhoon hit western Alaska, but that 7 months has not