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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.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.

Eternal God, we find consolation in the knowledge that our times are in Your hands. As we gather in Your presence, we thank You for Your unfailing love, sustaining grace, and faithfulness. You have guided us through seasons of joy, sorrow, and victory. You have never forsaken us.

Lord, grant wisdom to our lawmakers. May they trust You when the path ahead is unclear. Give them courage to stand firm when challenges arise and faith to believe that You are working all things together for good. Strengthen their hearts, unite them with a passion for freedom, and make them instruments of Your justice, love, and peace in our world.

We pray in your glorious 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 PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ARMSTRONG). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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.

The Senator from Iowa.

MEDICAID

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, during the mid to late 1990s, President Clinton and a Republican Congress worked hard to do a bipartisan reform package. It required work requirements for people who were on welfare.

It was a great success. It reduced the welfare population by about 40 percent, and a lot of people were saying having to go to work ended up being one of the best things in their life. It changed their life. So having a job gives people purpose and dignity. You guessed it; it is central to having a happy life.

Now, more recently, along the lines of what we did in the 1990s, in the Working Families Tax Cut law, signed by the President last July 4, Congress established further commonsense work requirements for able-bodied adults receiving Medicaid.

Federal law already requires able-bodied adults to work if they are on food stamps and receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash assistance.

As required in last year's tax bill, last week, following up on that statutory requirement, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services—CMS for short—released regulations for these work requirements before their implementation January 1 of next year. Now, the public has a chance to comment on the interim final rule through the end of July. So before the end of July, any citizen in the United States—well, I mean, you don't even have to be a citizen. You just have to take advantage of giving your views on this interim rule. So let CMS know your view—that is everybody and anybody.

As the law requires, the Medicaid work requirements only apply to able-bodied adults, ages 19 to 64. To fulfill the requirements, a person has a lot of alternatives: getting a job for at least

20 hours a week, going to school at least 20 hours a week, or volunteering at least 20 hours a week, or receive job training for at least 20 hours a week. So there are lots of flexibilities that ought to meet the needs of people who want to keep their Medicaid Advantage. In other words, if you are capable, you can't just sit at home watching television.

Now, there have got to be some exceptions to this work requirement, so I will discuss those at this point. The elderly, people with disabilities, medically frail, pregnant women, and children are all exempt from the work requirements. That makes sense. It is a reasonable thing to do. If people aren't able to work, and they still require Medicaid, they are exempt.

There are other exemptions. If you are an able-bodied adult, but you are a caregiver or a parent with kids under 14 years of age, you are exempt from the work requirements.

Also, if you have been hospitalized or need to get mental health treatment, you are exempted. There are other reasonable hardship exceptions for communities impacted by natural disaster or that have high unemployment rates.

Now, if that sounds like there are so many exemptions that nobody will have to meet the 20-hour work requirement, there will be just many, many people that will have to work, go to school, or take care of volunteer work if you are going to get Medicaid, and it is a reasonable requirement.

The Federal Government and many States are taking a data-first approach when implementing these work requirements: the government by using data and information to verify eligibility and exemptions before requiring the individual to prove they are compliant or exempted.

The added benefit is this: For those people that have to work, go to school, work for a nonprofit, or have a real job, these work requirements can lead to improved health outcomes and a reduction of poverty.

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



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The interim final rule takes note of research that finds that “obtaining and maintaining stable employment is associated with improved physical and mental health outcomes and greater overall well-being, while unemployment and unstable work are linked to poorer health outcomes.”

In other words, working is good for your health.

New evidence also shows the work requirement will lift 1–6/10 to 2–9/10 million people out of poverty, and that is exactly what we found as a result of the 1990 welfare reform bills that were passed by a Republican Congress when we had a Democrat President; in other words, very bipartisan.

Commonsense Medicaid work requirements for able-bodied adults take the same approach as welfare reform did in the 1990s, and I am repeating that because it was an important move that had very positive outcome effects.

So moving people from welfare to work and self-sufficiency was our goal in the 1990s, and it is a goal that was established in the tax bill of last year in regard to Medicaid.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. 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 MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SURVEILLANCE ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, in 4 days, authorization for our Nation’s most critical intelligence-gathering tool will expire.

Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act allows the U.S. Government to target the digital information of foreign actors located outside of the United States for specific national security purposes, such as counterterrorism, counterintelligence, and stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Established in the wake of September 11 to address gaps in foreign intelligence collection, this program plays a vital role in foiling bad actors, including terrorists, cyber criminals, and drug and weapons traffickers.

Our Nation’s policymakers—from the White House to the Pentagon, to Congress—rely upon intelligence acquired from section 702 on a near daily basis. Twenty-four percent of the National Security Agency’s intelligence reports in 2025 contained section 702 information. So did 62 percent of projects in the CIA’s daily World Intelligence Re-

view and 63 percent of articles in the President’s Daily Brief.

Just to bring this down to the concrete, more than 90 percent—90 percent—of synthetic drug disruptions enabled by the CIA in 2025 relied on section 702 information. Synthetic drug disruptions—that is operations targeting fentanyl and fentanyl analogs, poison intended for America’s streets. The CIA reports that one raid alone supported by section 702 resulted in the seizure of more than 1 metric ton of fentanyl pills from a facility in Mexico.

And drug disruption is just one activity supported by 702 information.

Section 702 provided intelligence that helped prevent a terrorist attack at a Taylor Swift concert. It enabled law enforcement to warn potential U.S. victims of ransomware attacks planned by North Korea. It helped enable the successful mission against al-Qaida’s top leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in 2022. It has identified threats to U.S. troops and provided information key in pursuing the release of Americans held hostage abroad.

The list goes on. Suffice it to say that section 702 plays a vital role in providing intelligence to protect our country.

We have considered multiple 702 reauthorizations since the program’s inception, and each time there is a robust discussion of the program and its safeguards to ensure that civil liberties are protected in the collection of vital intelligence. Two years ago, a bipartisan coalition of Senators voted to reauthorize this program with 56 bipartisan reforms that have now been fully implemented by the Trump administration. The result is that 702 is the most overseen intelligence collection tool in the world.

Over the past several weeks, both Senate Democrats and Republicans have been working on a section 702 reauthorization in good faith. The bill released by Chairmen COTTON and GRASSLEY last week includes additional bipartisan reforms over and above those included in the House-passed bill and over and above the robust guardrails already in place to ensure that 702 operates within the law and with respect for civil liberties.

On Friday, I would have expected those Democrats who have been working with us to vote to advance the bill. After all, some of the provisions in the bill were included at their request. But they didn’t. Why? Because they disagree with a short-term personnel choice made by the President: his temporary appointment for Acting Director of National Intelligence.

Democrats have every right to disagree with the President’s choice for this position, no matter how short-term the appointment is likely to be, but I invite my Democrat colleagues to think about what they are doing here in holding this vital intelligence collection program hostage because they don’t like the President’s temporary—temporary—DNI pick.

I have talked at some length here today about the critical role that section 702 plays on a near daily basis in protecting Americans from a range of threats. And you don’t have to take my word for it. The top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee has also made it clear that he regards section 702 as a key intelligence source. And yet he and a number of his colleagues are holding up reauthorization because they disagree with the President’s, again, temporary DNI pick.

Without Democrat cooperation, in 4 days, the section 702 program will go dark. America’s enemies, however, will not—will not—go dark. They will continue working against the United States, whether that is conducting cyber attacks, planning terrorist activity, or trafficking fentanyl and other deadly drugs into our country. The only difference is that our intelligence Agencies will have a greatly reduced capacity to discover these activities.

I hope my Democrat colleagues will rethink their decision to hold the 702 program hostage before we all have cause to regret the consequences.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill 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.

The majority whip.

WORKING FAMILIES TAX CUT ACT

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Working Families Tax Cut law has put more money in people’s pockets and pocketbooks. It made a real difference when people filed their taxes this year. Refunds went up; taxes went down. Working families kept more of the money that they had earned.

Over 60 million American families have benefited from at least one of the new tax cuts that the Republicans passed this past year. Over a million Americans benefited from no tax on car loan interest—average deduction \$1,800. Over 7 million Americans benefited from no tax on tips—average deduction \$7,000.

Twenty-nine million Americans benefited from no tax on overtime—average deduction there \$3,100.

Thirty-five million Americans benefited from the senior deduction on Social Security—average deduction there \$7,500.

And that is not all, 40 million American families benefited from the child tax credit. They were able to deduct \$2,200 for each of their children. The Department of Treasury confirmed that about 97 percent of Americans received a tax cut this year.

People who benefited the most were Americans earning less than \$200,000 a year. Every single Democrat in this