

Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 3274 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Mississippi.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, reserving the right to object. Mr. President, I object.

While my colleague's bill seemingly aims to assist expecting mothers with the burdensome cost of pregnancy and childbirth, I would like to point out that this legislative effort is not designed for success, and it has zero bipartisan support.

However, bipartisan support in this arena is possible, and I am so grateful to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have worked with me on the Supporting Healthy Moms and Babies Act. I introduced this effort last year with Senators KAINE, GILLIBRAND, and HAWLEY to insulate expecting parents from the high cost of pregnancy and childbirth by eliminating cost-sharing requirements for prenatal, childbirth, neonatal, perinatal, or post-partum healthcare. Bringing a child into the world is costly enough without piling on cost-share fees that saddle many mothers and families with debt. The bill would take away some of the burden for childbearing generations.

My hope is that if we can relieve the financial stresses associated with pregnancy and childbirth, more families will be encouraged to embrace the beautiful gift and the responsibility that comes with parenthood.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1756

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, it is toward the end of June, and 250 years ago today Thomas Jefferson was in the third floor of a rented space in Philadelphia, literally by himself, working at a desk that he had built himself writing a declaration—250 years ago literally today he was by himself writing away on that.

Within about 4 days from now 250 years ago, the Committee of Five—the four others that worked with him—all determined: No, this is the document that we are going to present to the Continental Congress. It is kind of remarkable to be able to think about that kind of history.

They determined that they were going to end that simple statement at the introduction to say:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, [that] they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

It was a much-debated statement, and they made several different changes to it, but that same statement 250 years later still rings true as a core value of who we are as Americans.

Today I rise to be able to mark the fourth anniversary, though, of the Dobbs decision—a decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade* and returned the issue of abortion and when life begins and who we are going to be as a people on this issue of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness back to the elected representatives from the States and to the people.

Today we are remembering 60 million children who died under the 49-year time period under *Roe v. Wade* and the conversation that is still happening all over the country. We the people are still having a dialog about the value of every human person and whether life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness still applies to everyone. Does it apply to only people that are a certain height, a certain weight, a certain age? Or does it apply to every single person?

I am one of those crazy people that actually believe that children are valuable—all of them. And I know it is much maligned in our culture currently, and it is very vogue to be able to say some children are valuable and some children are disposable and those children that are disposable, we shouldn't even discuss. But, honestly, I think we should continue the conversation, the dialogue that has been going on for 250 years, to determine: Does life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness apply to all of us? Are all people created equal, or are some people more equal than others?

Just because a child cannot defend themselves, just because a child doesn't weigh very much yet doesn't mean it is not a child.

Science would say that life begins at conception when the cell division happens. Every single cell in the woman's body has the exact same DNA except when she is pregnant—then there are certain cells in the womb that have different DNA. Do you know why? Because it is a different person.

And there is cell division happening in the woman's body because she is alive, and there is cell division happening in that child's body because so are they, and they are a uniquely different God-created person. They are not inconvenient. They are a child. And we are still having this conversation as a country to try to determine what are we going to do about that.

So me and my colleagues have come to the floor today on the fourth anniversary of the Dobbs decision and said: Let's keep the dialogue going. Let's keep talking about this issue of when a child is a child. Do they have to be a certain weight? Do they have to be a certain age? Do they have to be a certain height? Or is it when basic science would say that child is a child?

What is interesting about this is I am not even bringing a bill tonight to be able to deal with the issue of abortion

of a child. I am actually bringing a bill tonight to be able to talk about conscience of individual healthcare providers.

You see, most doctors and healthcare professionals share a common science-based belief that a child in the womb is just like the children they care for outside the womb. The only difference is time.

A child at conception and a child outside the womb are no different. It is just 40 weeks older. That is it. I am 40 weeks older than I was 40 weeks ago. That child is 40 weeks older from conception to birth, but it is still the same child.

The millions of Americans who believe this same truth, we have conscience protection laws on the books, and we have had them on the books for a long time. In fact, there are 25 Federal conscience protection laws right now that are already the law of the United States. Many of these have just flatout not been controversial. Let me give you a couple of them.

The Church amendments. These laws protect the conscience rights of individuals and entities that object to performing or assisting in the performance of an abortion or a sterilization against their religious or moral convictions. When that passed Congress—right after *Roe v. Wade*—when that passed Congress, it passed 92 to 1. It was not controversial.

In 2004, when Congress created the Weldon amendment—which is in all of our annual appropriations bills still. The Weldon amendment bars the Federal Government and State and local government recipients of Federal funds from discriminating against healthcare entities that refuse to provide, pay for, provide coverage, or refer for abortions. It wasn't controversial. It passed overwhelmingly. It still continues.

The conscience protection bill that I bring tonight is also very straightforward. It is already in Federal law that individuals have the right of conscience. The challenge is, those individuals only are protected in the right of conscience if the Federal Government actually goes and prosecutes individuals that violate their conscience. So if the executive branch chooses not to enforce the law—they just ignore it, though it is federally against the law but no one prosecutes—then nothing happens and that individual has rights that are actually not protected by their own government.

This conscience protection bill is very simple. It says if their rights of conscience have been violated, according to Federal law, that individual has a private right of action to bring their own suit. If the Federal Government won't defend their rights under Federal law, they have the ability to be able to bring it on their own.

This is a very simple, straightforward bill. It doesn't change anything about abortions. We will have the exact same number of abortions the next day after this passes that we did

today—exactly the same. But what it does is it says to a person that literally it violates their own conscience to be mandated to perform an abortion but yet their company that they work for is forcing them to be able to carry this out against their own conscience—this allows them to be able to object and to be able to say: Someone else here needs to perform this; I should not be required, for the fear of my own employment, to be able to take care of living, healthy people or hurting people that I am also being required to take the life of a child at the same time when that violates my conscience.

So this is a straightforward bill that, again, won't limit abortion at all but will protect the rights of individuals to have their own rights of conscience.

So, Mr. President, as if in legislative session, notwithstanding rule XXII, tonight I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 1756; further, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I rise to object to this bill, which would restrict access to vital healthcare coverage and make healthcare more expensive for many Americans.

Thirteen States, including my home State of Oregon, have passed laws that require insurance companies to cover reproductive care, including abortion services. If this became law, this proposal would override those State laws. It would let insurance providers deny women coverage for care they need.

Women should make their own healthcare decisions, not politicians, not State governments, and certainly—certainly—not insurance companies.

For all of these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2524

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I rise now to offer my legislation with Senators TINA SMITH and PATTY MURRAY to restore funding for Planned Parenthood.

That funding was gutted under the Republicans' budget bill passed nearly a year ago. In that time, 23 Planned Parenthood clinics have closed, and 75 percent of those were in rural or underserved areas. Breast cancer exams fell by 25 percent.

Planned Parenthood, unfortunately, has become a scapegoat for many Republicans. In reality, these clinics provide lifesaving primary care. They provide cancer screenings, annual exams, and testing. The majority of these clinics serve areas where there is already a shortage of providers. The fact is that they are a lifeline for rural Americans.

As our country faces a nationwide healthcare provider shortage, this body should be doing everything in its power to expand access to care and bring down costs. Instead, many Republicans remain laser-focused on forcing their agenda on the American people—an agenda that results in closed clinic doors, fewer providers, and higher costs.

The legislation that I now offer, this evening, would restore funding for Planned Parenthood clinics. It would restore lifesaving healthcare for millions of women, especially those living in rural areas and healthcare deserts.

Mr. President, therefore, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be discharged from further consideration of S. 2524 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I actually brought a bill tonight to be able to protect the conscience rights of individual healthcare workers. It doesn't change the number of abortions in America. It doesn't raise insurance costs. It doesn't do anything else.

It just says to a nurse that doesn't want to perform abortions that her hospital can't compel her to be able to perform abortions. That seems like a pretty reasonable bill. Obviously, my colleague disagrees on that. But he wants to instead bring a bill that dramatically could increase the number of abortions in America.

There used to be a time where we used to talk about abortion being safe, legal, and rare. That doesn't even seem to be in the conversation anymore, and it is just how do we get more.

Planned Parenthood did almost half a million abortions alone. And I know there is a lot of conversation saying they do health screenings and such. They are most known for doing abortions—about a half a million of them. Planned Parenthood does two abortions a minute across the United States—a minute.

The problem is, this Planned Parenthood entity that has \$2 billion in income and nearly \$2.5 billion in assets is also one that has faced very serious allegations. One of the most recent serious allegations came from the "far-right" newspaper the New York Times.

The New York Times, which is not exactly known for being a right-leaning periodical, did an extensive article outlining the problems with Planned Parenthood all across the country. Let me just read to this body part of what the New York Times printed about Planned Parenthood.

They talked about the botched abortions that they have done in New York and the scores of allegations that the

New York Times reviewed and the times that they said that Planned Parenthood gave "poor care."

Here is another quote from them:

In a case settled in California last year, a woman accused the organization of improperly implanting a birth control device in her arm and causing nerve damage.

A Nebraska clinician in 2022 did not realize that a woman was four months pregnant when she inserted an IUD. Several hours later, the patient was rushed to an emergency room and gave birth to a stillborn fetus.

For months last year at the North Central States affiliate, which oversees the Nebraska clinic, an understaffed nursing department did not upload sexually transmitted infection test results into charts, and patients wrongly believed that their results were negative when they did not hear back.

Not only is Planned Parenthood doing a half a million abortions, but even according to the New York Times, the testing that they are doing and the other work that they are doing, they are botching.

This is how they listed the Omaha Planned Parenthood clinic:

[S]ewage from a backed-up toilet seeped into the abortion recovery room for two days, according to interviews with staff members and photographs and text messages shared with The Times. Employees shoved exam table pads under the bathroom door to block the leak. Patients vomited from the stench.

Sewage seeped under the door at a Planned Parenthood facility in Omaha last year.

[C]linic workers complained that they were learning from inexperienced peers. More than a dozen said they did not receive adequate training for patient intake, blood draws and other tasks.

They go on and on and on. It is a very long article that the New York Times laid in there and talked about how that wealthy donors have stepped in to be able to help fill the gaps but that Planned Parenthood is not using that actually for healthcare; Planned Parenthood is using the money donated to them for their political operation—not patient care.

So when my colleague says that Republicans don't want to provide funding to Planned Parenthood, it is true because of not only their medical records and for what is happening all around the country in these locations, but this has become a political operation more than a healthcare operation.

We have a lot of great—I mean great—federally qualified health centers all around the country that are doing a terrific job taking care of families and women in many places, but they are not specializing in abortion. Planned Parenthood is focused on abortion. And even according to the New York Times, they are not even doing a good job at that.

So, yes, I do oppose this, and I do object to providing more money for an entity that is not taking care of even what it is already doing and is focused on taking the life of children, not protecting the lives of families.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.