

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.

The Senator from Utah.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. President, almost 250 years ago, 56 delegates to the Second Continental Congress affixed their signature to the most influential document in the history of human rights: the American Declaration of Independence.

Over succeeding generations, more than 100 other nations would model their own declaration of independence with statements that followed the American pattern of 1776. It proclaimed liberty as an unalienable right in what Walter Isaacson has called “the greatest sentence ever written.”

Among our unalienable rights, the document declared, are “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Defining liberty and giving definition, substance, and legal guarantees of that right has been one of America’s greatest ongoing commitments to the betterment of humanity. And at the forefront of that pantheon of liberties the Declaration affirms has been the right to believe and practice religion according to the dictates of our own conscience.

Four decades ago, 160 of 170 international constitutions were modeled, in whole or in part, on the American model. Freedom of religion is guaranteed in principle, if not in fact, in 97 percent of those constitutions.

When the first colonists arrived in the New World, religious freedom existed in theory, like that of John Locke, but not in political practice. Roger Williams founded Rhode Island on the principle of sole conscience in 1636, and 150 years later, in 1786, Thomas Jefferson authored the pioneering Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom:

Almighty God hath created the mind free and manifested his Supreme will that free it shall remain.

The State legislation he proposed therefore decreed that no person shall “suffer, on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all [persons] shall be free to profess . . . their opinions in matters of religion.”

It was a long journey from Jamestown to Plymouth Rock, to that Virginia statute, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

America has made great progress, but the road has been, at times, harrowing for those people at the margins of our mainstream.

Quakers were hanged in Massachusetts in 1659. Baptists were imprisoned in Virginia in the 1770s. Catholic convents and schools were burned in 1834. My own people, the Latter Day Saints, were mobbed and murdered in Missouri and Illinois in the decade to follow. And Jewish people have been the victims of discrimination and violence from the founding to the present.

One of the lessons to be learned from this history is that you can legislate religious protections but you cannot legislate respect or compassion or bonds of charity. Yet religious freedom hinges on these virtues.

Our public discourse, however, has never tipped so precariously into what Arthur Brooks has called a “culture of contempt.” If you think you sense something alarming in the air, the statistics say you are right. A March 2026 Pew survey reveals the distressing fact that Americans view their fellow Americans with more hostility and suspicion than is the case in any democracy surveyed.

The United States is the only place surveyed where more adults describe the morality and ethics of others living in the country as bad, 53 percent, than as good, 47 percent. We can do better. We have to do better.

Yes, as members of this national community, we have the right to espouse our values—religious, moral, or political—without hindrance or constraint. That also means we must accord to others the right to espouse their values without hindrance or constraint.

Religious freedom is distinctly intertwined with pluralism because the free exercise of religion presupposes a mosaic of differing values and other life orientations.

The words “kindness,” “civility,” and “charity” nowhere appear in our Constitution or our Declaration of Independence, whose anniversary we will commemorate next week. That is because those values were presupposed by the Founders.

This grand experiment in democracy required for its organization and requires for its continuation a willingness to build bridges of understanding, as well as defend principles to which we are committed.

Dr. Matthew Holland has written of how civic charity is deeply embedded in our thoughts; John Winthrop, leader of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, of Thomas Jefferson, America’s apostle of religious liberty, and of Abraham Lincoln, who so powerfully invoked the better angels of our nature at a time of national crisis.

We will never achieve consensus on the particulars of our religious commitments or our lack of religious commitments, nor should we. Our pluralism is a source of our strength and should be a source of pride.

However, we can honor our founding principles by returning to the particular kind of faith they did have in common: faith in the essential goodness of each other and one another.

The psychologist Jamil Zaki has written: Cynicism is a lack of faith in people. Skepticism is a lack of faith in our assumptions. Charity is the only way whereby we flourish in our differences, even as we work together for a more perfect Union.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

WAR POWERS RESOLUTION

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, in a few minutes, we will move into a series of votes, and one of the votes is a motion to proceed to a resolution that I filed a number of weeks back, an Iran War Powers Resolution.

The current status of that resolution is that, about a month ago, we successfully discharged it from the Committee, and so it is now able to be called up on a motion to proceed.

I want to just inform all of my colleagues that, while I am always going to vote for a motion to proceed to my resolution, the resolution is completely superfluous. It is completely superfluous because both Houses of Congress have now taken the historic step of voting for the first time, under the history of the War Powers Resolution, that the President of the United States cannot restart a war legally unless he asks Congress for permission. That has left the station.

Both Houses—Republican majority—have said it will be illegal for Donald Trump to start back the war against Iran without a vote of Congress.

And so any action on the motion to proceed to my resolution is superfluous because that vote is done, Congress has spoken, and the will of both Houses is now clear.

So I will vote to proceed to my motion, but no one else should feel any stress about this one. Congress has clearly spoken and rebuked the President for starting an illegal war, and said he can’t restart it without us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

S.J. RES. 196

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, in the United States today, 42 million Americans are drowning in \$1.7 trillion in student debt—42 million Americans, \$1.7 trillion in student debt. Further, a recordbreaking 9 million Americans are now in default on their student loans.

Instead of providing financial relief to these Americans, the Trump administration is about to make a bad situation even worse.

As we all know, President Trump’s so-called Big Beautiful Bill—to my mind the worst piece of legislation passed in modern history—made the largest cut to education in the history of the United States in order to pay for the largest tax breaks for billionaires in American history. Not only did we throw 15 million people off the healthcare they had; we devastated Federal funding for education.

If Congress allows these education cuts to take effect, beginning on July 1, just 6 days from now, 7 million Americans will be thrown off of their low-cost student loan repayment plan, known as the SAVE plan and into a much more expensive plan.

What does that mean in real terms? It means that the average college graduate will be forced to pay \$4,000 more each year on their student loan payments, about \$244 a month.

At a time when tens of millions of Americans—working-class Americans—are struggling to pay for the outrageous cost of housing, groceries, prescription drugs, healthcare, and other basic necessities, the last thing in the