

VENEZUELA

someone will step up to help Jolene in this way.

So Canada does, however, have an alternative healthcare system. It is called the United States of America, if the patient can afford to come here and pay for the services. I have highlighted before how Canadians' cancer patients are coming to America for treatment. Socialized medicine leads to longer wait times and scarce resources. Let this be another reminder of socialized medicine's failures.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, 2025 was a historically busy year here in the U.S. Senate: the longest session period in more than 15 years; the greatest number of votes in half a century; many, many, many hours in session, substantially exceeding the average of the past 78 years.

What do we have to show for all of that? More than 400 Presidential nominees confirmed, far exceeding the totals of the first year of President Trump's first term and of President Biden's; repeal of a number of burdensome Biden rules and regulations, including multiple rules that would have driven up prices for American families and businesses; legislation to combat the fentanyl epidemic; to keep criminal illegal immigrants off our streets; to create the first U.S. Federal framework for stablecoins and ensure U.S. leadership in financial innovation; and first and foremost, of course, we passed the Working Families Tax Cut and the rest of our landmark legislation.

January 1 was this past Thursday. If Democrats had their way, Americans would have been facing a big tax hike at the start of this year. Instead, thanks to the Working Families Tax Cut, Americans will continue to pay the lower tax rates Republicans passed in 2017. And that is not all.

In addition to making permanent the tax relief we passed in 2017, Republicans have added a number of new tax relief measures to ensure that Americans can keep more of their hard-earned money. We further increased the standard deduction. We further increased the child tax credit and indexed it to inflation so that its value will never go down. We added a new bonus deduction for seniors, no tax on tips and overtime, and the list goes on.

Thanks to our legislation, Americans will be able to keep more of their hard-earned money permanently, and that is not all our legislation did. Our once-in-a-generation legislation also invested in our national security, in a more secure border, and safer streets.

We repealed Democrats' natural gas tax and took steps to unleash Amer-

ican energy production to ensure Americans have a stable and affordable energy supply and more.

Our goal for 2025 was more money in Americans' pockets, new opportunities, and safer streets. We are accomplishing that with the Working Families Tax Cuts and the rest of our landmark legislation, and we will continue to expand on that work in 2026.

There are a number of bills that I would like the Senate to take up, including ROAD to Housing—legislation that addresses housing affordability and availability—and market structure legislation that builds on the success of the GENIUS Act and provides long-overdue clarity on digital asset regulation.

Our first item of business, though, is appropriations. We still have work to do to get as many full-year appropriations bills as possible across the finish line for fiscal year 2026. I made it very clear when I became majority leader that I wanted to get the Senate back to regular-order appropriations, and we made a strong start last year, passing three appropriations bills with robust bipartisan margins before the August work period—the first time that we have passed an appropriations bill that early since 2018.

Unfortunately, Democrats then chose to shut down the government, which seriously delayed our appropriations work. But we got right back to it after Democrats finally agreed to reopen the government, and we were able to get those three appropriations bills signed into law by the President this fall.

Now we have another bipartisan, bicameral package of three bills that was released today and is ready to move through the House and the Senate. That will be the priority as soon as this package comes over from the House, and Senators can expect continued work on appropriations for the remainder of January.

We have a January 30 deadline to fund the government, and nobody should want a repeat of the recent Democrat shutdown at the end of this month. So let's get the rest of this year's appropriations bills done so we can turn our attention to our other responsibilities and to getting the next fiscal year's appropriations bills done in a timely fashion.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. 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 MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, early Saturday morning, as we all know, U.S. forces apprehended Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife. Both of them are now in U.S. custody.

First, I will say this: Maduro is a tyrant. Nobody mourns what has happened to him. Under his watch, the people of Venezuela have suffered immensely. But now the crucial question is, What comes next for Venezuela and, more importantly, for the United States?

Nobody really seems to know. The administration's story keeps changing by the hour. Even after Secretary Rubio spent all day Sunday trying to clean up Trump's mess, the President went right back to repeat that the United States will now apparently run Venezuela for a while.

On and on and on. No plan. No clarity. Only chaos.

Ironically and dangerously, the chaos Donald Trump has engendered in Venezuela leads him on, in his mind, to think he should try the same thing in Colombia, in Iran, and even in Greenland.

But the danger in Venezuela is only beginning. Donald Trump has opened a Pandora's box, and things can get out of hand very quickly. And if Donald Trump tries to do to Colombia and Greenland what he did to Venezuela, the disasters and consequences could compound exponentially, as bad as Venezuela alone is going to be. Whenever our country has gotten involved in this kind of regime change and nation building, American families pay the price in blood and in treasure. That is what happened in Iraq, for instance.

The American people did not sign up for this kind of military adventurism when they voted for Donald Trump. They wanted a President focused on America first, focused on lowering the cost of living, lowering healthcare costs, lowering grocery prices. Just like Donald Trump broke his promise to release the Epstein files, he is now breaking his promise to end American involvement in the endless wars.

I warn my Republican colleagues: The backlash from the MAGA base on the war in Venezuela will be swift, fierce, and thunderous, just like it was with the Epstein files. And if the Republicans go along with Donald Trump on Venezuela, Americans will pay the price in blood and in treasure, while Republicans could very well pay the price politically.

In the meantime, the next step for Congress is clear: We must stop Trump's folly by invoking the War Powers Act. Later this week, I will join Senator Kaine, Senator Schiff, and Senator Paul in forcing a vote on our War Powers Resolution, a bipartisan measure that will affirm Congress's authority on matters of war and peace when it comes to Venezuela. If there was ever a time for Republicans to step up to the plate and stand up not just for the authority of Congress but for

our national security, our safety, that time is now.

Separately, this afternoon, leaders of the House and Senate will meet with senior administration officials to ask questions about what is going on in Venezuela—try to get to the bottom of it—and what the plan is moving forward. An all-Senators briefing is also being organized for later this week. I demanded these briefings immediately after the strike on Saturday.

The administration owes Congress and the American people some pretty basic answers to many important questions—most importantly: What the hell does Donald Trump mean when he says the United States now intends to “run” Venezuela? Does this mean we are now in the business of nation building Venezuela? Are we going to put troops on the ground? How many? Where? And how much will it cost? How long will this go on? These questions should be answered to the Congress and, more importantly, to the American people before the administration attempts anything akin to so-called running Venezuela.

Frankly, we also know why Senator Rubio misled Congress so blatantly over the past 4 months. On three occasions, I asked Rubio whether or not the administration was seeking regime change in Venezuela. Three times the answer was no. We never really believed him in the first place, to be candid. But if Secretary Rubio wasn’t straight with us about Venezuela, what else is he not being straight with us about now? What else is he not being straight with the American people about now? For example, is an attack on Colombia now on the table? What about Iran or Greenland?

How is any of this putting America first? The simple answer is that it is not.

If you are a family of four in New York and your healthcare premiums just doubled on January 1, what are you supposed to think when you read in the paper that Donald Trump is spending billions attacking Venezuela? If you are struggling to keep a roof over your head, if you are falling behind on your mortgage payment, what are you supposed to think when Donald Trump says we are going to “run” Venezuela for a while?

The American people did not sign up for another round of endless wars. They want Donald Trump to focus on the problems here at home: on healthcare, on housing, on energy, on groceries. But Donald Trump’s promise to keep us out of foreign entanglements is now as worthless as his promise to release the Epstein files.

He promises his base one thing on the campaign trail and does the exact opposite once he is in office, and it is the American people who will pay the price.

COST OF LIVING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, on cost of living, if Donald Trump re-

fuses to focus on the one thing Americans want most, which is to lower the cost of living, Democrats are happy to do it for them. As we begin 2026, Democrats enter the new year on our front foot. The cost of living will remain the No. 1 focus for this week, this month, this year, and beyond.

The tip of the spear for so many people when it comes to costs, of course, is healthcare. It is now January 5, 2026. For tens of millions of people, the reality of sky-high premiums has now been locked in, thanks to Republicans who let the ACA premium tax credits expire last year. Millions more no longer have healthcare at all. Many others have switched to lower quality plans and can no longer see the doctors they have gone to for years and years and years or afford the medicines that their children have been taking to cure deadly diseases. Parents without insurance now don’t know what to do if their kids get sick.

Every Democrat in the Senate voted to extend the premium tax credits at the end of last year. And a number of Republicans—a small number, unfortunately, of Republicans—in both Chambers say they want to do it. But instead of listening to the vast majority of Americans who want these tax credits rendered, Leader THUNE and Speaker JOHNSON have sided with rightwing extremists who are happy to see these credits die. The result: higher premiums, more uninsured Americans, greater uncertainty for the people back home—especially people, actually, in the red States.

Democrats will not relent on the issue of the cost of living, of how difficult it is for Americans to pay the bills for things they need. The topic is not going to go away anytime soon. In fact, it will only grow in intensity over the year.

But, as everyone knows, healthcare is not the only part of the story when it comes to lowering the cost of living. In the coming weeks and months, Democrats will lay out cleanly and comprehensively how we can lower costs for the American people on a number of different topics—from health to housing, to groceries, to childcare, to energy costs, and beyond.

In the coming weeks, for example, I will work with a number of my colleagues, including Senator WARREN, on the many options we have to help Americans pay for housing. We also need to look at lowering grocery costs. We need to end Donald Trump’s destructive tariffs. We need to help families afford daycare. These are the things that Americans care about, not invading Venezuela, not attacking Colombia, or dreaming of invading Greenland.

The Democrats are focused on the things that matter to the American people, and we will focus on these like a laser—the high cost of living; affordability. Just like Democrats are dialed in on healthcare and brought the Nation’s attention to this important

issue, we are also focusing on costs as they relate to housing and groceries and energy and childcare and so much more.

We show the contrast that, while Donald Trump and Republicans are spending all of their time on foreign wars, on ballrooms, on private jets, Democrats are the ones focused on helping people pay the bills for the things they need every day to live their lives decently.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BRITT). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Kansas.

NATIONAL EARTHQUAKE HAZARDS REDUCTION PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2025

Mr. MARSHALL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to immediate consideration of Calendar No. 183, S. 320.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 320) to reauthorize the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1977, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which was reported from the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in italic, as follows:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Reauthorization Act of 2025”.

SEC. 2. MODIFICATION OF FINDINGS.

Section 2 of the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1977 (42 U.S.C. 7701) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by striking “50 States, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico,” and inserting “States and Tribal jurisdictions”;

(B) by striking “of them” and inserting “States”;

(C) by striking “Tennessee,” and inserting “, Tennessee,”; and

(D) by striking “A large portion of the population of the United States lives in areas vulnerable to earthquake hazards” and inserting “Almost half of the United States population resides in areas that are at risk or experiencing a damaging earthquake during the 50-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Reauthorization Act of 2025”;

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) by inserting after the first sentence the following: “A 2023 report by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the United States Geological Survey (FEMA P-366) estimates the annualized earthquake losses to the national building stock is \$14,700,000,000 per year and the total economic exposure to earthquake losses (buildings and contents) across the nation is \$107,800,000,000.”; and