For millions of Americans who buy their own insurance through the Affordable Care Act, the problem became much worse this year after the Republicans on the other side of the aisle allowed enhanced premium tax credits to expire. These credits helped working families afford coverage, especially people that do not get health insurance through their employer, including small business owners, independent contractors, and farmers.

The average monthly premium for people buying coverage on the ACA Health Insurance Marketplace increased 58 percent this year alone, and many Americans have been forced to switch to plans with higher deductibles just to keep their monthly premium within reach. Others have dropped health insurance altogether. ACA enrollment in my State dropped by 15 percent because premium costs pushed my constituents out.

For farmers, this healthcare affordability crisis is particularly painful. Farming is not a 9-to-5 job with a benefits package. Many farmers are self-employed.

At the same time, President Trump's war in Iran and reckless tariffs—a version of which he reinstated last week, after the Supreme Court struck down his last batch effort—are squeezing American farmers and farmers in Illinois.

The cost of diesel fuel, fertilizer, and equipment have all skyrocketed. Now health insurance is added to the list.

National Public Radio in Illinois recently told the story of Ben and Paula Sue Steffen, lifelong farmers in Nebraska. Last year, they paid $13,000 annually for health insurance after receiving support from ObamaCare, the ACA's enhanced premium tax credit. This year, after congressional Republicans refused to extend those tax credits, the Steffens can expect to pay $32,000 annually for coverage, more than double the $13,000 they paid last year. They moved to one of the cheapest plans available, which still carries a $7,200 deductible.

It is not just the Steffens in Nebraska. I heard directly from farmers in Illinois, who report the same or similar health insurance price hikes.

Ben is a farmer from McLean County. He is self-employed. He buys health insurance for himself and his family and their daughter. He told me his family is healthy but their health insurance now costs $1,458 each month. That is nearly $17,500 annually just in premiums.

Ben told me:

> Health care is drowning me.

He went on:

> That's crushing me. Something has to change.

Think about it: A farmer working to support his family and feed this country is paying almost $17,500 a year just to keep his family insured. Yet, instead of lowering these costs, President Trump and congressional Republicans have spent the past year making the problem much worse. They allowed the ACA's enhanced premium tax credits to expire, despite repeated warnings about what it meant for families. And they slashed $1 trillion from the program called Medicaid.

That is a program which is critically important. Think about this for a moment: Every other birth in my State of Illinois is paid for by Medicaid. Seventy percent of the men and women who are in nursing homes in my State are covered by Medicaid. And now the Republicans have proposed slashing $1 trillion from Medicaid in their so-called Big Beautiful Bill despite pleas from rural hospitals and others that these cuts could be devastating.

Rural hospitals are the academic engines of many rural communities—the biggest employer, one of the most important businesses in town. They operate on razor-thin margins and serve the largest share of patients who are uninsured or covered through public programs.

As more people lose coverage, rural hospitals and clinics face even greater pressure to cut services. I have seen it happen in downstate Illinois. Hospitals in some of the larger towns have announced that they are no longer going to provide OB/GYN services, as an example. For a farmer who may already live miles from the nearest hospital, losing that local hospital or local clinic or maternity ward or emergency department can literally be a matter of life or death.

Instead of building grand ballrooms in the White House, outfitting new aircraft as Air Force One, and starting an unnecessary war with Iran, the President should be focused on what matters most to Americans: bringing down the cost of living.

We should immediately restore the enhanced premium tax credits that made coverage affordable and protect Medicaid and the rural hospitals that communities depend on. We should also be working together to lower healthcare costs, not forcing farm families and other families like Ben's to shoulder thousands more in costs each year.

Ben told me:

> Something has to change.

He is right. In less than 100 days, he will have his chance to speak as an American about the future and whether we can put up with what we have seen so far.

Senate Democrats will keep fighting to make quality healthcare more affordable and accessible for all, including farmers, rural communities, and working families across Illinois and America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BRITT). The Senator from Washington.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, we have our work cut out for us as we work to fund the government for the coming fiscal year.

As costs for our families go up and up and up, the President wants a $1½ trillion war budget, and he wants to cut programs working people depend on to pay for it. No. No way. And as his disastrous war with Iran rages on, Trump is even asking for another $70 billion on top of that to bankroll the war. It is really hard to imagine more backward funding priorities, especially as so many families today are struggling and being hurt by the cuts to healthcare and food aid.

Congress is not an ATM to fund Trump's disastrous wars abroad, so, as I have said many times, we need to rip up the President's budget and write a new one. I have been very clear from the start: We absolutely must prioritize helping families and lowering costs as we do that, and that means rejecting the President's astronomical defense request and instead delivering significantly more funding for our nondefense budget so we can invest in helping people here at home.

It is clear that we will definitely need more time to get this done and reach bipartisan agreement on the funding levels, just as we have done in the Senate for the last 3 years, which then allows us to draft bipartisan bills for fiscal year 2027. So I am very glad we were able to craft a bipartisan CR to keep the government funded and to make sure we can avert a shutdown that no one wants, while giving us time to reach a bipartisan agreement on a top line in our funding bills.

Two weeks ago, House Republicans sent us an incomplete CR with several major issues. It is critical that we address those issues in any CR, and that is exactly what we have done.

Perhaps most important, we closed a loophole in the House Republican CR that would have allowed the Trump administration to transfer funding provided for other programs to Border Patrol. That was a nonstarter. Until Republicans finally agree to enact desperately needed reforms to ICE and Border Patrol, we cannot approve another cent for them.

This new CR that we have written includes some really important extensions and language that House Republicans did not, and that includes extensions of authorizations for important health, veterans, and infrastructure programs and language to make sure that key housing programs and a program to help feed low-income seniors can continue serving Americans.

This bill also rejects requests from President Trump for even more flexibility and funding for the Pentagon, including $1 billion for Trump-class battleships.

My Democratic colleagues and I pushed very hard and secured an important provision to prevent the Office of Management and Budget from implementing its corrupt new grants rule, which would have required a Trump political appointee to sign off on every last Federal grant and empowered them to terminate any grant at any point for any reason. That disastrous rule would put politics above science when determining, for example, what cancer research grants to fund. I am going to keep working to kill that rule outright as our spending talks continue later this year.

Unfortunately, Republicans would not take action in this bill to protect our constitutional power of the purse and prevent Russ Vought from attempting another illegal pocket rescission, nor would they agree to our efforts to extend critical advanced appropriations for infrastructure, which were provided by the bipartisan infrastructure law. That runs out on October 1. Make no mistake—we will keep fighting to get those priorities done in the negotiations in the fall.

We do have a lot of work ahead, and this CR provides us a reasonable runway to get it done. So I hope this CR sets us up to roll up our sleeves and focus on getting to a bipartisan top line so we can then write good, bipartisan spending bills.

For all of those reasons, I will be voting yes tonight to advance this bipartisan bill.

WASHINGTON WILDFIRES

Madam President, I can't come to the Senate floor without acknowledging the heartbreaking devastation we are seeing in Spokane and across Eastern Washington. My heart is with everyone who is affected by these horrific fires, and please know I will keep doing all I can to make sure the Federal Government steps up.

This short-term funding bill importantly includes flexibility for the Disaster Relief Fund so it can serve our communities in need during the CR.

I am glad FEMA has so far approved the FMAG requests our local officials have made as they are fighting these wildfires. And last night, our Governor made a formal request to the President for an expedited emergency declaration. I am leading our entire congressional delegation, Democrats and Republicans, in urging the President to approve that request immediately.

I do want to say how grateful I am to the fire crews and first responders who are working around the clock to save lives and property and how inspired I am by the way the Spokane community has come together to support those who have lost their homes or are under evacuation orders.

I will have far more to say on this crisis, but let me close with this: As the vice chair of the Appropriations Committee and a voice for Spokane here in the U.S. Senate, I will do everything in my power to make certain Eastern Washington gets every cent they need to fight these horrific fires and to rebuild and recover over the long term.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the cloture motion on the motion to proceed to H.R. 6500.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 320, H.R. 6500, a bill to extend duty-free treatment provided with respect to imports from certain countries in Africa under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, to extend customs user fees, and for other purposes.

John Thune, Tim Sheehy, John Barrasso, John Cornyn, John Hoeven, Mike Crapo, James Lankford, Kevin Cramer, Steve Daines, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Tom Cotton, Roger Marshall, Thom Tillis, John R. Curtis, Jon Husted, Pete Ricketts, Cynthia M. Lummis.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the mandatory quorum call under rule XXII has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 6500, a bill to extend duty-free treatment provided with respect to imports from certain countries in Africa under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, to extend customs user fees, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from South Carolina (Ms. GRAHAM), and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Michigan (Ms. SLOTKIN), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 89, nays 4, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 218 Ex.]

YEAS—89

Alsobrooks	Banks	Blumenthal
Armstrong	Barrasso	Blunt Rochester
Baldwin	Bennet	Boozman
Britt	Hickenlooper	Peters
Budd	Hirono	Reed
Cantwell	Hoeven	Ricketts
Capito	Husted	Risch
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Rosen
Collins	Johnson	Rounds
Coons	Justice	Schatz
Cornyn	Kelly	Schiff
Cortez Masto	Kennedy	Schmitt
Cotton	Kim	Schumer
Cramer	King	Scott (FL)
Crapo	Klobuchar	Scott (SC)
Cruz	Lankford	Shaheen
Curtis	Lee	Sheehy
Daines	Luján	Smith
Duckworth	Lummis	Sullivan
Durbin	Marshall	Thune
Ernst	McCormick	Tillis
Fetterman	Merkley	Tuberville
Fischer	Moody	Van Hollen
Gallego	Moran	Warner
Gillibrand	Moreno	Warnock
Grassley	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Hagerty	Murphy	Wicker
Hassan	Murray	Wyden
Hawley	Ossoff	Young
Heinrich	Padilla	

NAYS—4

Kaine	Sanders	Warren
Paul		

NOT VOTING—7

Blackburn	Markey	Welch
Booker	McConnell	
Graham	Slotkin	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). On this vote, the yeas are 89, the nays are 4.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The motion was agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

AGOA EXTENSION ACT—Motion to Proceed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion to proceed.

The clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 320, H.R. 6500, a bill to extend duty-free treatment provided with respect to imports from certain countries in Africa under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, to extend customs user fees, and for other purposes.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO MARK EISELE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, at the 114th Wyoming State Fair, Senator LUMMIS and I will have the pleasure of introducing Mark Eisele as a 2026 inductee to the Wyoming Agriculture Hall of Fame.

Mark Eisele comes from a long line of Wyoming ranchers, dating back generations. However, Mark built his livestock operation on his own from the ground up.

Mark has long been an iconic leader for Wyoming agriculture. His career