

The state's health care agency said it will use the funds to strengthen rural health care clinics in a variety of ways, including: creating wellness and nutrition programs to rural providers; educating and attracting health care professionals to work in rural areas; and modernizing resources and technology in rural centers.

More specifically, it plans to "add more than a thousand rural health care" positions with the additional funds.

Another news article reports on Ohio, noting that "the state's proposal focuses on addressing barriers to healthcare by building on existing state investments to expand access to care, strengthen the rural health workforce and modernize facilities and technology."

Georgia will be using Rural Health Transformation funding to upgrade technology and invest in its rural workforce. North Carolina will use the fund to, among other things, support more than 400 rural health facilities.

The list goes on.

My own State of South Dakota will be using its funding to invest in a number of priorities, including a major investment in telehealth, which can be a key way to access healthcare for those in rural areas.

South Dakota will also be using its funding to create regional hubs for emergency services and to improve access to maternal and infant health, to ensure delivery of essential medical care.

Back in June, a few months before Democrats tried to repeal the Rural Health Transformation fund, the Democrat leader said:

This little fund to help reimburse rural hospitals is just a fraud.

He should tell that to his State, which applied for the program and received a \$212 million grant. And that is for 2026 alone. When the State announced its application, the Office of New York State Mental Health Commissioner, Dr. Ann Sullivan, stated:

Expanding access to services in underserved communities is an important part of our effort to strengthen mental health care statewide. The Rural Health Transformation Grant will help New York State explore new partnerships, build our health care workforce, and pursue innovative opportunities to expand care in these areas.

Let me repeat that.

The Rural Health Transformation Grant will help New York State explore new partnerships, build our health care workforce, and pursue innovative opportunities to expand care in these areas.

That doesn't sound like fraud to me. Perhaps the Democratic leader would have preferred his State to miss out on these resources.

Perhaps he would disagree with the Democrat Governor of Hawaii, who said:

As a relatively small State, this will help us a lot to keep our hospitals open, to make sure there are providers available to have telehealth available.

Mr. President, the Democrat leader can spread all the disinformation he wants. The Rural Health Trans-

formation Program is in effect, and every State in the Union is benefiting. Republicans will continue to work to make healthcare more comfortable and accessible for American families.

I want to thank Dr. Oz and his team at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for their tireless work to get this program up and running on an expedited timeline. I look forward to seeing all the ways this program will help transform healthcare in rural America.

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. 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.

VENEZUELA

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today having just come out of a secure briefing about the arrest of Nicolas Maduro.

Our country has carried out one of the boldest law enforcement operations in decades, and we should be very proud. We should celebrate it and be proud of the men and women in uniform who made sure this was successful. This administration had the courage to do what was right, what needed to be done; and America, Venezuela, and the world are much safer as a result of it.

Operation Absolute Resolve was conducted for one reason: to bring to justice a murderous dictator and an indicted drug trafficker. Maduro is an outlaw, and he is now in custody. The Trump administration indicted him in 2020 on drug trafficking charges. President Trump put a \$15 million bounty on him. The Biden administration agreed, and they actually increased that amount to \$25 million. Neither the first Trump administration, nor the Biden administration, nor the current administration recognized Maduro as the legitimate leader of Venezuela.

Now, we are not alone in that view. Many of our allies around the world have taken the same position, hold the same belief. Yet only America had the resolve and the resources to bring Maduro to justice. No American lives were lost, as we learned in our briefing and as we have seen, and it was a textbook example and demonstration of peace through strength. The message to the entire world is clear: If you poison and kill the American people, you are going to be held accountable.

Arresting Maduro also advances America's national security. Maduro's allies and enablers are united in their commitment to undermine our Nation: China, Russia, Iran, Cuba, even Hezbollah. Communist China was buying half a million barrels a day of oil from Venezuela—day after day, after

day. In exchange for that oil, the Chinese Communist Party loaned Venezuela over \$100 billion. Just hours before his arrest, Maduro was meeting in Caracas with officials of the Chinese Communist Party. This axis of aggression is weaker now because President Trump has taken decisive action, and our men and women in uniform were able to carry it out.

All around the world, people are seeing dictatorships failing. That is why Venezuelans are celebrating in the streets today. It is also why Iranians are uniting today across their country to protest the suppressive dictatorship. They have good reasons to demand their freedom.

Yet, today, there are Democrats in this Chamber—some may come to the floor later today—who are using the arrest of Nicolas Maduro not to advance American interests, no. They are using it to attack President Trump. This week, they are going to force a vote on another War Powers Resolution to tie the hands of the President. Let me be clear about what that resolution does and what it does not do. It does not reassert Congress's powers. It does not make America stronger. It makes America weaker and less safe. It will weaken the President's legitimate constitutional authority.

This body, the U.S. Senate, is being asked whether the President of the United States has the authority to arrest indicted criminals. Of course he does. Democrats want to weaken the President's ability to enforce the law of the land. That is the wrong message to send to hardened drug traffickers and to dictators.

It is interesting because, for years, Democrats were for holding Maduro accountable. Senator CHRIS MURPHY, a Democrat from Connecticut, tweeted in 2019 that "getting rid of Maduro is good for the United States." That is one of the Democrats who are opposing what the President of the United States has done. He called for it in the past.

Senator CHUCK SCHUMER, the Democratic leader, who will be on this floor in a few minutes, came to this very floor in 2020 and complained about President Trump, saying President Trump "hasn't brought an end to the Maduro regime."

Senator CHRIS VAN HOLLEN from the Foreign Relations Committee, a Democrat from Maryland, told MSNBC just last year—he said:

[T]he United States needs to work with its partners and allies in the region to ratchet up the pressure [on Venezuela].

Democrats know absolutely that President Trump did the absolute right thing. They won't admit it on this floor. They prefer to play politics instead. Within the last several days, Senator SCHUMER called arresting Maduro "reckless." What a change and reversal in tune. Senator VAN HOLLEN said it was an illegal "act of war," a complete reversal of his previous positions.

Senator MURPHY told CNN on Sunday that Venezuela, he said, is “not a security threat” to the United States. He sure viewed it differently in the past. Evidently, they were all for it before they were against it. That is what we see with these Democrats: something they are for, President Trump does it, and now they are against it.

The question I have for Democrats is, Do they no longer think that arresting Maduro is a good thing? They supported it in the past—every one of them.

Arresting Maduro was not partisan or political. It was a professionally executed law enforcement action conducted by a superb team of dedicated military professionals, and I congratulate each and every one of them. Every parent in this country should be happy today about this arrest because now their children will be safer from poisoning and death. This arrest will save thousands of American lives—lives that would have been lost due to Maduro’s drug trafficking.

And what are the numbers? Was it 80,000 American lives lost since 2020 as a result of the poison that Maduro has forced into this country? On Saturday, President Trump took bold action, and he took action to protect the citizens of this great country.

We should celebrate the success in Venezuela. We should take great pride in the brave men and women who carried out the successful mission. Republicans are going to continue to stand on the side of safety, security, and America peace through strength.

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

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

HEALTHCARE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this month, January 2026, marks a new era for Medicare. After decades of empty promises about lowering the cost of prescription drugs, the prices of the 10 most expensive drugs under Medicare will finally fall.

Starting this year, 2026, seniors who rely on medications to treat blood clots, diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers will see discounts of up to 79 percent for these essential drugs. There are 9 million American seniors who will save a total of \$1.5 billion in annual out-of-pocket costs, including nearly 300,000 seniors in Illinois who take 1 of those 10 drugs.

Why did it take so darned long to lower these prices? Politicians have been talking about it for years. For years, Medicare was blocked from negotiating the price of drugs by the pharmaceutical companies. They didn’t

want to cut into their profits. That changed when Democrats passed the Inflation Reduction Act in 2022 under the Biden administration. This law empowered Medicare to bargain for fair prices for medications used by seniors.

Not one single Republican voted for this bill in 2022. Let me say that again. Democrats overcame the objections of congressional Republicans and Big Pharma, who were complaining about how negotiating drug prices was socialism—socialism. Now seniors will be saving hundreds of dollars a month because Democrats rolled up our sleeves to deliver price cuts on prescription drugs.

What has President Trump done to make healthcare more affordable? Nothing. Instead, he decided to slash Medicaid by \$1 trillion with the passage of the so-called big beautiful budget bill.

Because of this law, many hospitals across Illinois and across the country, especially in rural areas, may not survive. Rural hospitals are the backbone of communities in my State and in many others. They are the anchors of the local economy. Several hospitals that are barely squeaking by today have told me they will fall into the red because of the Republican healthcare cuts in this law. Recently, I surveyed all of the hospitals in Illinois, and 129 responded to my survey. They wrote to me to say they will struggle greatly with these cuts from the big beautiful budget bill of the Trump administration. These hospitals will face longer emergency room wait times. They will be forced to cut services, including behavioral health and maternity care. They will have to lay off doctors and nurses, which is exactly the opposite of what we need in rural America.

My Republican colleagues know exactly how devastating these Medicaid cuts will be. That is why they attempted to remedy the situation by including a \$50 billion rural health transformation grant in their Big Beautiful Bill. Let’s do some math here. They are cutting \$1 trillion out of Medicaid, and they are trying to fill that gap with \$50 billion. I am a liberal arts major, but I think I can do basic math. What they are talking about doing is restoring 5 percent of the \$1 trillion they are cutting from Medicaid—5 percent.

In addition to cutting \$1 trillion from Medicaid, congressional Republicans refused to extend the Affordable Care Act enhanced premium tax credits under Trump’s Big Beautiful Bill. Last year, 22 million Americans relied on these credits to afford their healthcare, but now they have expired. Despite pressure from patients, physicians, and providers, congressional Republicans refused to extend them.

What is the impact of refusing to extend this program that makes health insurance more affordable? I am afraid it is obvious. During the 2026 open enrollment period, millions of people decided to drop their health insurance coverage. Others are being forced to

make impossible choices between food, car payments, and housing costs. If we fail to immediately solve these problems, millions of people will become uninsured in this country, and those who will retain coverage will pay double or triple for their healthcare plans.

It is not too late to do something even though we are hopelessly divided on most of the issues facing us. Let’s hope that health insurance will be the exception. Congress can extend the tax credits and reopen the sign-up period before the worst impact is felt.

At least some of my Republican colleagues recognize the pain their refusal to negotiate has caused. Last month, four Senate Republicans—four—broke ranks to vote with Democrats to extend the enhanced premium tax credits and help people pay for their health insurance—four Republicans. In the House, four House Republicans signed a discharge petition to force a vote later this week to extend the tax credits. We must be ready to act when the bill arrives in the Senate.

Americans do not have time for Congress to litigate the entirety of the U.S. healthcare system, but we do need to triage now. Let’s do something to help these people keep their health insurance. I have spoken with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and have made it clear we want to help Americans pay for these bills. I want to join them. It should be done on a bipartisan basis, and we should waste no time.

VENEZUELA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is a heady experience to go through a classified briefing at the highest levels of our government, and virtually every U.S. Senator of both political parties had that opportunity this morning. I took advantage of it. It is rare and important. It was an explanation by our leaders in the Cabinet and the administration of what happened in Venezuela just a few days ago when Mr. Maduro was removed from power and brought to the United States to be held accountable for his actions in narcotics terrorism.

This is not a new issue to me. In 2018, I took a trip to Caracas and met with President Maduro, his First Lady, and members of his administration. It was clear to me that Venezuela was in trouble. You could see it on the streets. People were literally starving, and hospitals were going without medicine. It was pretty clear to me that Maduro was ruling not by democratic appeal but by the force of his power in office.

He was facing an election in just a few weeks, and I told him at that time that, if he did not have international observers at his election to verify that it was an honest election, the world would not believe the results. He ignored my advice, which was no surprise. He went ahead with the election and had a disputed result. He claimed victory, which others said didn’t happen, and he did it again a few years