

now know that didn't work. The amount of money that went into the fund was rather insignificant, so those who undercharged aren't getting much and companies are going out of business.

Today we take a crucial step forward in beginning to lift the burdens and the higher cost of this law that has been placed on all Americans. As I mentioned, this is a special budget operation that only requires 51 votes. The House has already passed a bill with more than a significant majority.

By the time we are done, the legislation the Senate passes will eliminate more than \$1 trillion in tax increases placed on the American people while saving more than \$500 billion in spending. Most importantly, this bill begins to build a bridge from the President's broken promises to a better health care system for hard-working families across the country.

Let's talk about the broken promises. As a Presidential candidate, then-Senator Obama promised Americans they could keep their health plan if they liked it. When he was in office and the bill was there, he said: If you like your plan, you can keep it. Millions soon learned they can't. This is because ObamaCare has drastically reduced America's choice among health care plans through a Federal Government takeover of the insurance marketplace. In fact, the President's promise, "If you like your plan, you can keep it," was named PolitiFact's "Lie of the Year" in 2013 after the health care plan cancellations were mailed to over 4 million Americans.

Let's talk about the higher costs. Americans were also promised lower health care costs, but even the administration admits ObamaCare is failing to address costs and said average premiums are expected to rise by 7.5 percent this year. Recent headlines from across the country actually show much more dramatic increases.

In Minnesota insurance policies on the exchange have rate hikes in the double digits—between 14 and 49 percent. In Oregon premiums for the benchmark plan on the exchange will go up about 23 percent. In Alaska the premium hike will be more than 31 percent for the benchmark plan. In Oklahoma the second lowest cost silver plan premiums will increase more than 35 percent. In Utah plans on the federally run exchange will be 22 percent higher next year.

The President of the United States himself promised that this bill was not a tax. In fact, this was one of the law's top selling points because Democrats knew it would never pass if they said it was a tax, but while they got the bill passed and signed into law, the Supreme Court later ruled it is a tax. This law was deceptively sold to the American people and now these hidden taxes are being passed on to hard-working families in the form of higher fees and costs. It is time for Democrats in Congress and the President to admit

that ObamaCare is a \$1 trillion tax hike that families and employers simply can't afford.

We can talk about fewer choices. ObamaCare's mandates and taxes on employer-sponsored health care plans are not only leading to higher out-of-pocket expenses but also fewer choices and services for 150 million Americans who have relied upon job-based health benefits for decades. It eliminated some of the competition, and competition is the real way to bring down prices.

I remember when we did Medicare Part D. I was a little concerned because there were only two companies that were providing the pharmaceutical benefit in Wyoming, and I thought they would maybe drop out of the program, but Medicare Part D increased competition. What did increased competition do? It brought down the price of the pharmaceuticals by 25 percent before it even went into effect.

ObamaCare didn't provide for more competition. According to the non-partisan Kaiser Family Foundation, employees who have job-based insurance have witnessed their out-of-pocket expenses, on average for an individual, climb from \$900 in 2010 to \$1,300 in 2015. Employees working for small businesses now have deductibles of over \$1,800. Since ObamaCare became law, several large employers have stopped offering benefits to part-time employees, including Walmart, Target, Home Depot, and Trader Joe's. The premiums have gone up and the deductibles have gone up. There are fewer choices and higher costs.

So this was supposed to build a bridge to better care. Over the past 50 years, our Nation has made great strides in improving the quality of life for all Americans, but these transformative changes were always forged in the spirit of bipartisan compromise and cooperation. These qualities are essential to the success and longevity of crucial programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.

Shortly before he retired in 2001, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a Democrat from New York, said:

Never pass legislation that affects most Americans without real bipartisan support. It opens the doors to all kinds of political trouble.

Senator Moynihan correctly noted that the side that didn't support the law will focus on each and every misstep. More importantly, he predicted that the measure's very legitimacy would always be in doubt and that the majority of Americans would have trouble supporting it in the long run unless it unquestionably achieved all of its goals.

We have seen each of these scenarios play out over the past 5 years as the health care law has polarized America like nothing before.

Bipartisan support, of course, means that both sides get some things into the mix of the bill. That did not happen

even though we had a very extensive amendment process in committee and on the floor. Essentially, the Republican ideas were all thrown out. Both sides weren't included, so it was not a bipartisan bill.

After passage of the bill, we had a special time at the Blair House where there were half Republicans and half Democrats who got to speak with the President for a day. The amazing thing at that meeting was that every time a Republican mentioned an idea, the President blasted it immediately. When the Democrats suggested an idea, those were all good. At the end of the day, it turned out to be very much a waste of time because not a single idea was even considered that was brought up at that time by the Republicans.

We still need health care reform, but it has to be done the right way—not comprehensive. In my opinion, "comprehensive" means so large that nobody can understand it, and that is kind of what happened with this bill. We have to do it step by step. They can be pretty big steps, but if we do it step by step, we can bring the American public along. They can understand it, and they can tell us the unintended consequences, and those can be fixed. It would be correctable. This bill hasn't been correctable. We have known the flaws. The President has put waivers on to keep us from noticing them sooner. We have offered to make corrections but have never been taken up on our offer.

Providing access to high-quality, affordable health care is something I am confident that Democrats and Republicans should be able to do. It is time to build a bridge from the broken promises to better health care for each and every American once and for all.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until 4 p.m. today, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.
The Senator from Vermont.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION BILL

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as the ranking member of the Budget Committee, I rise in strong opposition to the budget reconciliation bill we are debating today. In fact, this bill should tell every American just how far removed the Republican leadership here in Congress is from the realities of American life and the needs of the American people.

At a time when the United States is the only major country on Earth that does not guarantee health care to all people; when 29 million Americans today have no health insurance and even more are underinsured, with high

deductibles and high copayments; when we pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs and when one out of five Americans is unable to fill the prescriptions written by their doctors because drug prices are so high, what this legislation does is move us in exactly the wrong direction. It would throw more than 17 million Americans off of health insurance by gutting the Affordable Care Act. So we have a health care crisis, and this bill makes the crisis much worse.

Every other major country on Earth guarantees health care for all of their people as a right, but this bill would add 17 million more Americans to the ranks of the uninsured, creating a situation in which we would have 46 million Americans without any health insurance at all.

I think any sensible person would ask an obvious question: What happens to people who lose their health insurance? How many of those people will get much sicker than they otherwise would have because they are unable to go to a doctor when they need to go? How many of those people will not be able to get the prescription drugs they need? In fact, how many of those people will die? Let's be frank. When we throw 17 million people off of health insurance, people will die because they don't go to a doctor when they should and they don't go to the hospital when they should.

We know that before the passage of the Affordable Care Act, 45,000 Americans died each year because they lacked health insurance and didn't get to a doctor in time. I have talked to many doctors in Vermont and throughout this country who tell me that yes, of course, people walk into their door much sicker than they should have been.

When the doctor asks, "Why didn't you come 6 months ago when you were sick?" patients say, "I didn't have any health insurance and I couldn't come." By the time they walk in the door, too often it is too late. That is not what should be happening in America, but that is what will increasingly happen if this legislation were to pass.

In the United States of America, when a person is sick, that person should be able to access health care and see a doctor. That is not a radical idea. And when a person goes to the hospital, that person should not end up in bankruptcy.

Instead of throwing 17 million Americans off of health insurance, what we should be doing is expanding on the improvements of the Affordable Care Act to make health care a right of all people, not just a privilege.

Further, let's be clear—and I think everybody here in the Senate understands this—the bill we are debating today is a complete waste of time. This is just another reason why the American people have so little respect for the Congress. There are major crises facing our country, and the Republican leadership is once again attempting to

repeal ObamaCare. I kind of lost track of how many times this effort has been made. I think in the House it is over 50. I don't know how many it is here in the Senate. Let me break the news to my Republican colleagues, although I am sure they already got the news: President Obama is not going to sign a bill repealing ObamaCare. I think that is not likely to happen. And what we are doing today is just a waste of time.

Let's also be clear—this bill doesn't just gut the Affordable Care Act, it also eliminates funding for Planned Parenthood, which provides health care services to nearly 3 million women each and every year.

Last week three people were killed and nine were wounded at a shooting at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, CO. While we still don't have all of the details as to what motivated the shooter, what is clear is that Planned Parenthood has been the subject of vicious and unsubstantiated statements attacking an organization that provides critical care for millions of Americans and, in fact, provides very high quality care.

I, for one, strongly support Planned Parenthood and the work it is doing. In my view, instead of trying to defund Planned Parenthood, we should be expanding funding so that every woman in this country gets the health care she needs.

It is also my sincere hope that people throughout this country, including my colleagues here in the Senate and across the Capitol in the House, understand that bitter, vitriolic rhetoric can have serious, unintended consequences.

Now is not the time to continue a witch hunt for an organization that provides critical health care services—from reproductive health care, to cancer screenings and preventive services—to millions of Americans. No one is forced to seek care at Planned Parenthood. It is a choice—a choice millions of women make freely and proudly.

This legislation is not only bad legislation and it is not only a waste of time because if it passes, it will be vetoed, but what it also tells the American people is that the Republican leadership is not prepared to discuss or to address the major crises facing our country.

Just today a report came out stating that the top 20 wealthiest people in this country own more wealth than the bottom half of the American people—20 people on one side and 150 million people on the other. The level of wealth inequality in America is grotesque and unacceptable. Not one word in this bill addresses that issue.

Today in America, millions of our people are working longer hours for lower wages. They are working two or three jobs just to survive. Yet 58 percent of all new income created is going to the top 1 percent. Is there anything in this legislation that would raise wages for millions of American workers who are struggling to keep their families solvent?

This is a bad piece of legislation. It is a piece of legislation that is not going to go anywhere because it is going to be vetoed, and it is a piece of legislation that I think speaks to why the American people are giving up in so many ways on the political process. People are struggling all over this country. They are hurting. They are working longer hours for lower wages. They can't afford to send their kids to college. They can't afford childcare. They are worried about high unemployment. This bill attempts to repeal ObamaCare. That is where we are.

I hope very strongly that this bill is defeated. If it is not defeated, I hope and expect the President will veto it.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 30 minutes in morning business.

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

OBAMACARE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, let me take my colleagues back 5½ years to February 25, 2010, and the White House health care summit at the Blair House—the same place where Senator Arthur Vandenberg sat down with George Marshall. They met privately to discuss the postwar plans after World War II. The result of that discussion became the Marshall Plan. It was the perfect setting—it is the perfect setting for a serious, bipartisan discussion for how to improve health care for Americans.

Thirty-six Members of Congress went to the Blair House that day at the invitation of President Obama. We were there to discuss the health care bill passed by the Democrats, what is now known as Obamacare. We stayed there all day. The President stayed there too. It was televised continuously. Both then-Minority Leader Boehner and Republican Leader McConnell asked me to lead off in speaking for Republicans.

I said to the President that day that I was there not only to represent the view of Republicans but that I was there also as a former Governor and that I would like to have a chance to speak for the Governors as well because Governors managing States had a big stake in all of this.

I also said that I was at the summit to represent the views of a great many of the American people who have tried to say in every way they knew how—through town meetings, through surveys, through elections in Virginia and New Jersey and Massachusetts—that they oppose the health care bill that was passed in the Senate in the middle of a snowstorm on Christmas Eve.

I warned the President then about the unfortunate consequences of Obamacare for millions of Americans. I said to the President that this would send an unfunded Medicaid mandate to States. I said: