

then discharged from a hospital, the agency found, roughly 121 of them developed such a condition. That rate is unchanged from last year, but it is down 17 percent from 2010, when it was about 145 out of every 1,000 patients.

Based on the existing research about what happens to patients who get sick in the hospital and what it costs to treat them afterwards, that decline works out to roughly 87,000 lives saved and \$19.8 billion not spent on extra medical care, according to the report.

"The progress is historic," David Blumenthal, president of the Commonwealth Fund, told *The Huffington Post*.

"We have never demonstrated a comparable decline in the history of the U.S. health system," added Blumenthal, a physician and researcher who also served in the Obama administration.

Broadly speaking, the progress is the result of a crusade that dates back at least to 1990s, when the Institute of Medicine released "To Err Is Human," a seminal report suggesting that nearly 100,000 people were dying each year because of preventable medical mistakes. Over time, researchers learned more about why these errors were so common and started developing methods for avoiding them. Probably the most famous of these was the introduction of checklists, like the ones that airplane pilots use before take-off, for making surgery safer.

But getting hospitals to adopt these methods was difficult, despite the best efforts of some private-sector organizations, in part because existing financial incentives did not reward hospitals for improving quality. If anything, the opposite was true. Hospitals made money for every new treatment and a patient who got sick in the hospital needed more care, rather than less.

A major goal of the Affordable Care Act was to reduce and eventually eliminate these incentives for poor quality care, while rewarding the hospitals that get better results. Today, for example, Medicare pays less to institutions with high rates of hospital-acquired infection, injury and readmission—in other words, large numbers of patients returning to the hospital for treatment shortly after discharge. That's because of a series of penalties the health care law created in 2010, which started affecting hospital revenue three years later. And under an initiative called Partnership for Patients, the federal government provides extra funding to hospitals that agree to monitor patient safety and implement schemes for improving quality.

Experts can't be sure about the impact of these reforms, in part because previous studies showed that errors were declining even before 2010, albeit at a slower rate. And the new initiatives raise plenty of serious criticisms—whether from hospital officials saying they are cumbersome to implement or from researchers who think the underlying data is unreliable.

But after the agency published last year's results, showing the steep decline in errors, a wide array of experts said the law's new incentives were influencing hospital behavior—and that, as a result, patients were getting better care. Lucian Leape, a professor at the Harvard School of Public Health and a pioneer in the patient safety movement, told *Politifact*, "I think these data reliable, and the ACA (Affordable Care Act) deserves credit."

The real cautionary note in Tuesday's report may be what it says about the future. If this year's preliminary data holds up, and the error rate for 2014 is truly no lower than it was for 2013, that would suggest progress had stalled—with infections and injuries lower than before, but not as low as they could be.

"On the positive side, there has been no backsliding, so hospitals are, in the lingo of quality improvement, 'holding the gains,'" Blumenthal said. "But from the standpoint of public policy and given our obligation to eliminate preventable problems, we would should aim to see continued reductions in rates."

HHS officials on Tuesday offered similar thoughts. At a conference in Baltimore focusing on health care quality, an announcement of the new data drew large applause. But Patrick Conway, chief medical officer at the federal government's Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, warned his audience not to be complacent. "The goal is to get to zero" errors, he said. "We've made significant progress. Now the question is how you accelerate that."

Mr. REID. Mr. President, among other things, this article says: "Hospitals have cut down on deadly medical errors, saving around 87,000 lives since 2010, according to a new government report."

I am not going to read the whole thing, but it is part of the RECORD.

The article also says:

Many analysts think government initiatives within the Affordable Care Act have played a significant role in the progress so far.

In short, ObamaCare may literally be saving lives.

The new report comes from Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. . . . On Tuesday, the agency announced its latest findings on these "hospital-acquired conditions". . . . That rate is unchanged from last year, but it is down 17 percent from 2010, when it was about 145 out of every 1,000 patients.

That is not the case anymore.

Continuing:

That decline works out to roughly 87,000 lives saved and \$19.8 billion not spent on extra medical care, according to the report. . . . A major goal of the Affordable Care Act was to reduce and eventually eliminate these incentives for poor quality care, while rewarding the hospitals that get better results. Today, for example, Medicare pays less to institutions with high rates of hospital-acquired infection, injury and readmission—in other words, large numbers of patients returning to the hospital for treatment shortly after discharge. . . . And under an initiative called Partnership for Patients, the federal government provides extra funding to hospitals that agree to monitor patient safety and implement schemes for improving quality.

So to my friend who continually berates ObamaCare, we have before us today and tomorrow an effort to show how wasteful the time is trying to wipe out ObamaCare. The House has voted 46 times. The Republicans, of course, have lost every time. In the Senate, I think it has been 16 times or 17 times trying to repeal ObamaCare. Each time, it failed, as it will fail in the next day or two.

#### RHETORIC OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, when Americans elect leaders, they do so in good faith. Our constituents want us to govern responsibly and work to embody American values. Both elected of-

ficials and candidates must realize that our words have deep meaning and can influence people far and wide. That is why I am very disappointed that instead of talking about issues important to the middle class, the Republicans have turned to the politics of hatred and division.

It seems no one is safe from this Republican vitriol. Republicans demagogue women seeking health care through Planned Parenthood. Republican candidates use women, infants, and children seeking refuge from terrorism to fearmonger. Muslim Americans, immigrants, and even Americans exercising their constitutional rights in support of the Black Lives Matter movement are all subject to Republican insults and slander.

Over and over again, Republican candidates have resorted to hatred instead of appealing to the highest sensibilities of the American people. We all know that on race and other controversial issues, Republicans have long practiced subtle bigotry, but Republicans now simply say out loud the many things at which they used to merely hint.

Words have power, and when spoken by influential leaders, they infiltrate every corner of our society.

In the wake of last week's murderous attack at a Planned Parenthood health center in Colorado, a leading conservative activist said:

It really is surprising more Planned Parenthood facilities and abortionists are not being targeted.

Given the public light shed on the atrocities committed by Planned Parenthood and both the government and media's turning a blind eye to it . . . it really should be surprising that Americans convicted of the need to stop the murder of children have not taken the law into their own hands.

That is what the quote says.

We know how exaggerated, untruthful, and unfair the film was that was put together as some B-grade movie and that has so maligned Planned Parenthood. One out of every five American women will go to Planned Parenthood during her lifetime. It is the only health care that women have in many parts of America. Is that the kind of language you want to encourage in the United States of America, that there should be more violence in these health clinics? Certainly not, but it is all too common in the Republican Party of today.

Instead of recognizing the concerns of communities riddled by decades of police brutality and racial injustice, Republicans have vilified the Black Lives Matter movement, which has been drawing attention to these disturbing inequities. Rush Limbaugh has gone so far as labeling protesters a "hate group" for trying to bring equality to our criminal justice system.

Just a few weeks ago, supporters of the Republican Presidential hopeful Donald Trump attacked a Black Lives Matter protester on video at a rally. Instead of condemning the violence displayed by his supporters, Donald Trump encouraged it. When asked

about the incident, Trump said, referring to the protester, "Maybe he should have been roughed up." That is stunning. A Republican candidate for President of the United States urged violence to silence his critics.

Last week, four masked men with apparent White supremacist ties opened fire on Black Lives Matter protestors in Minneapolis.

I am amazed that the junior Senator from Texas had the audacity to say earlier this week that "the overwhelming majority of violent criminals are Democrats." And the article he quoted has been said to have been quoted improperly. That is really quite stunning, that someone with the academic background of the junior Senator from Texas cannot read a simple report. "The overwhelming majority of violent criminals are Democrats." Think about that. Fanning the flames of intolerance is un-American. We are better than this.

I am disappointed that Republicans who should know better are not speaking out against this vile rhetoric. According to the New York Times, "Some of the highest-ranking Republicans in Congress and some of the party's wealthiest and most generous donors have balked at trying to take down Mr. Trump because they fear a public feud with the insult-spewing media figure." That is a sad reflection on one of America's major political parties.

The Republican Party once claimed to stand for American leadership in the world, but as millions of Syrians have fled their country, seeking refuge from death and destruction, Republicans have instead used the humanitarian crisis as an opportunity to spread fear and animosity. Republican Presidential candidate Ben Carson described the Syrian refugees as "rabid dogs." Mike Huckabee referred to the Syrian refugees as a bag of poisonous peanuts. Even more disturbing is the junior Senator from Texas, who went so far as to suggest a religious test for accepting refugees fleeing violence and oppression. He only wants to accept Christians.

The Republican Party used to claim to stand for religious freedom, but they are now just pretending. Ben Carson doesn't think Muslims should be allowed to become President. The junior Senator from Florida, also a Republican Presidential candidate, speaks of a "clash of civilizations." Those are buzz words meaning a crusade against Islam. He is saying that ISIS extremists are representative of an entire religion.

It doesn't stop there. Republicans have targeted immigrants also—not just people who are seeking refuge, not just refugees, but also immigrants. The Republican Party wants to paint all immigrants as murderers and rapists. Congressman STEVE KING says all immigrants are drug traffickers. Republicans only talk about deporting families. Senator RUBIO, the Republican establishment favorite, walked away

from his single positive legislative accomplishment—comprehensive immigration reform—to please the party's extreme anti-immigrant base. He has gone from supporting citizenship for undocumented immigrants to wanting to deport DREAMers. And even Jeb Bush speaks of "anchor babies."

With the way our democracy is structured, there will always be disagreement about the best way elected officials can serve our Nation, but as we debate and disagree, we must do so responsibly.

President Bill Clinton once said that those of us with influence must be mindful of our words because they fall "on the serious and delirious alike." The venom Republicans continue to spew has consequences. History will judge those who stand idle as fear and animosity become the platform of an American political party.

The simple fact is that Republicans are running on a platform of hate, and every Republican who fails to speak out against the hateful, dangerous rhetoric being spewed by their party is complicit.

For the moral character of our Nation, we must demand that the Republicans return to the values on which our country was founded.

Mr. President, Senator MCCONNELL and I have finished our remarks. Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

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#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

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#### RESTORING AMERICANS' HEALTHCARE FREEDOM RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3762, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3762) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 2002 of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2016.

Pending:

McConnell amendment No. 2874, in the nature of a substitute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time spent in quorum calls requested during Senate consideration of H.R. 3762 be equally divided and come off of the reconciliation bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that for the duration of the Senate's consideration of H.R. 3762, the majority and Democratic managers of the reconciliation bill, while seated or standing at the managers' desks, be

permitted to deliver floor remarks, retrieve, review, and edit documents, and send email and other data communications from text displayed on wireless personal digital assistant devices and tablet devices. I further ask unanimous consent that the use of calculators be permitted on the floor during consideration of the budget resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ENZI. For the information of Senators, this UC does not alter the existing traditions that prohibit the use of such devices in the Chamber by Senators in general, officers, and staff. It also does not allow the use of videos or pictures, the transmitting of sound, even through earpieces, for any purposes, the use of telephones or other devices for voice communications, any laptop computers, any detachable keyboards, the use of desktop computers or any other larger devices.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, earlier this year, Congress approved its first balanced 10-year budget since 2001. In addition to helping make our government more efficient, effective, and accountable, this balanced budget resolution contained reconciliation instructions to provide for the repeal of Obamacare and pave the way for real health care reforms to strengthen the doctor-patient relationship; expand choices; lower health care costs; and improve access to quality, affordable, innovative health care.

These instructions focused on the key congressional committees with jurisdiction over Obamacare—the Senate Finance Committee; Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee; House Energy and Commerce Committee; House Education and the Workforce Committee; and the House Ways and Means Committee.

Our friends in the House passed their repeal bill in October and November, which repealed key parts of Obamacare, including the individual and employer mandates, the Cadillac tax, and the medical device tax, which is pending here today.

As most everyone knows, while the House and Senate are known collectively as Congress, they both have very different rules. This is why it is important to ensure that the House-passed repeal bill is in line with Senate rules and procedures.

The reconciliation process is governed by a combination of statutory rules, budget resolution provisions, precedents—and the interpretations of all these applicable standards ensure that any legislation which says it qualifies for reconciliation does actually do so.

The repeal bill passed by the House, H.R. 3762, contained material that qualified the bill in the House as meeting the conditions for reconciliation. The provisions were marked up and reported out of the three House reconciled committees, combined together