

have other good ideas then, and I hope they will offer them. They will certainly have the opportunity to offer them, but if the Senate is prevented from even proceeding to the bill, none of us will have an opportunity—not Republicans, not Democrats, not anyone.

I regret that our Democratic colleagues made clear from the outset that they weren't interested in working seriously with us to pursue the kind of comprehensive reforms needed to truly move beyond the pain of ObamaCare, but they will have a new opportunity soon. Once we get on the bill, they will have another chance to offer their solutions. I hope they will offer more than just a bandaid. I hope they will offer more than just a \$32 trillion reup of a failed idea.

Whatever they would like to propose, I hope they will take the chance to open debate and advance the legislative process—for every Senator, for every American.

Leaving the American people to suffer under the ObamaCare status quo, I think, is unacceptable. We have seen the pain in our home States. We have seen the heartbreak all across our country. The American people are relying on us to bring them real relief, so we will keep working hard to deliver just that.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, yesterday I shared some data reflecting the historic level of obstruction Senate Democrats have displayed when it comes to confirming our President's nominees. I noted that the opposition they have shown to these nominees most of the time seems to have little to do with the nominees themselves, nor whether or not Democrats even support them. In many cases, our Democratic colleagues actually support the nominees.

Take the nominee before us today for a U.S. district court judge in Idaho. He was reported out of committee on a voice vote. Every single Democrat then voted for cloture on his nomination. Yet Democrats still chose to throw up procedural hurdles to a nominee for whom they have no objection.

In fact, Senate Democrats have continuously forced procedural hurdles more than 30 times, compared to only 8 cloture votes Republicans required on nominees at this point in President Obama's administration.

They are obviously bound and determined to impede the President from making appointments, and they are willing to go to increasingly absurd lengths to further that goal—like requiring 30 hours of debate time on a noncontroversial nominee after having just voted unanimously that debate on the nomination was unnecessary.

If our Democratic colleagues keep up this current rate of obstruction, only allowing about one confirmation every 3½ days, it will take the Senate almost 11½ years to confirm the remaining

Presidential appointments that must come before us.

I will say that again. At this rate, it would take us nearly 11½ years to confirm the remaining Presidential appointments. That is why I say to my friends across the aisle, this near total obstruction simply cannot continue.

As the Democratic leader once said himself, "Who in America doesn't think a president, Democrat or Republican, deserves his or her picks for who should run the agencies? Nobody." That is a direct quote from the Democratic leader.

He went on. He said: "The American people deserve a functioning government, not gridlock."

So I would again ask my friend the Democratic leader and his party to consider the consequences of their actions and chart a different path. That is the best outcome for the country and for the Senate.

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. Madam 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.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, yesterday my friend the majority leader announced he would be extending this work period by 2 weeks so the Republicans can have more time to finish their healthcare bill. With all due respect, time is not the issue. Two more weeks will not help Republicans fix this bill. Remember, the Republican leadership told everyone they would vote on the bill before July 4. Two weeks have gone by, and they don't seem any closer to having a bill that would actually improve healthcare in America. They seem even further away.

When you have a rotten product, time is not on your side. The longer you wait, the more people know about it, the fewer people like it, the less popular it is, and the harder it is to pass it. I don't even have to tell my good friend the leader that. He knows it.

I know why our colleagues are not so unhappy about what the leader said. We know why our Republican colleagues don't want to go home. They don't want to face the wrath of their constituents. If I were a Republican, I wouldn't want to go home either. I wouldn't want to face my constituents and try to defend this deeply unpopular and damaging bill.

Now, the most significant change proposed to their legislation over the

course of 2 weeks is an amendment by the junior Senator from Texas that would actually make the bill worse. By allowing insurers to sell cutrate plans that cover very few services, the Cruz amendment creates a very dangerous bait and switch. The bait is that the premiums would come down for a bit for some because insurance will not have to cover very much, and the switch is that deductibles and copays go way up to make up even more than the difference. Under the Cruz amendment, you could be paying a monthly premium for a healthcare insurance plan so threadbare, with a deductible so high that you will not get any benefit. For many, a Cruz policy could be worse than none at all. The Cruz policy leads to junk insurance, something nobody really wants, except maybe a few insurance companies.

Ironically, the Cruz amendment would cause exactly the kind of death spiral my Republican friends keep talking about. A group of patient advocates, including the AARP, the Cancer Action Network, and the American Heart Association—these are hardly political groups; these are patient advocates—said that if the Cruz amendment passed, "younger and healthier individuals would be allowed to purchase non-ACA compliant plans that have lower premiums but fewer benefits."

Without the younger, healthier people in the risk pool, the premiums for ACA-compliant plans would rise quickly and significantly. This same kind of risk pool segmentation occurred prior to the enactment of the ACA when 35 states operated high-risk pools . . . In that experience, most of those states . . . were forced to limit enrollment, reduce benefits, create waiting lists, and raise premiums and out-of-pocket costs to the point of unaffordability. Millions of patients lacked access to care and treatment.

That is not CHUCK SCHUMER, the minority leader, talking. That is the AARP, the Cancer Action Network, and the American Heart Association. Again, those groups said about the Cruz plan that it would "limit enrollment, reduce benefits, create waiting lists, and raise premiums and out-of-pocket costs to the point of unaffordability," because the Cruz plan is very similar to what we had before the ACA. Even the conservative American Action Forum said the Cruz amendment is "the definition of a death spiral." Higher costs, less care, waiting lists, death spirals—that is the Cruz amendment in a nutshell. How many are going to vote for that?

That is the most significant change Republicans came up with after an extra 2 weeks on the bill. Imagine, if they have another 2 weeks, what they will come up with.

My friends on the other side of the aisle should have no illusions. They can't distract our attention from this bill by phony complaints over nominations or any other issue. More time is not going to solve their problem on healthcare. It is much deeper than that. The problem is the substance of