

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, the American people deserve better than ObamaCare.

Across the country, Americans are paying more for less under ObamaCare. Already, ObamaCare premiums have increased, on average, by more than 100 percent on the Federal exchange. Next year, ObamaCare premiums could rise by as much as 50 percent or more in States like Georgia and Maryland.

All across the country, Americans are losing choice and access. Already, Americans living in 70 percent of the counties have little or no options for ObamaCare insurance. Next year, nearly 40 percent fewer insurers have filed to participate in the ObamaCare exchanges. Many Americans face the real possibility of having no options to pick from at all.

These trends are not new—costs have been going up and choice has been going down for years—but these trends continue to get worse, and things are not likely to turn around unless we act.

ObamaCare was a direct attack on the middle class from the very start. It is a ticking timebomb today. ObamaCare's years-long hurtle toward collapse is rapidly approaching its seemingly inevitable conclusion, total meltdown, which would hurt even more Americans on top of those it has hurt already.

We can't let that happen, and we are continuing to work hard to ensure it doesn't.

After extensive consultation across the conference, numerous meetings with constituents, and intensive conversations with Members, our conference has updated last month's Better Care discussion draft with additional provisions to make it stronger. We just walked through that revised draft together. It is now available online. I encourage everyone to review it.

As before, it aims to stabilize and reform the collapsing insurance markets that have left too many with no options, and it aims to make insurance more affordable and more flexible so it is something Americans actually want to buy.

For those stuck with ObamaCare insurance they don't want or can't afford, we don't think they should be forced to buy it any longer. For those who buy insurance on an exchange and want to continue doing so, we want them to have lower premiums and more choices.

For those tired of healthcare decisions being outsourced to far-off bureaucrats, we want to transfer millions of those decisions back to them and to their doctors.

We also want to strengthen Medicaid for those who need it most, by giving States more flexibility while ensuring that those who rely on this program don't have the rug pulled out from under them. Many States want the ability to reform and improve their Medicaid Program so they can actually deliver better care at a lower cost, and we would like to dramatically expand their authority to do that. It is an idea that should significantly improve healthcare in States all across our country.

The draft we just discussed, like the one before it, addresses all of these objectives. It would again give Americans more tools for managing their own care and this time goes even further. It would again devote significant resources to the fight against the opioid crisis and this time goes even further. The revised draft improves on the previous version in a number of ways, all while retaining the fundamental goals of providing stability and improving affordability.

Now, regardless, I am sure we can expect many of the same, tired, and predictable attacks from the defenders of ObamaCare's failed status quo. It hardly matters what the draft says; they would launch the same kinds of attacks anyway.

I would remind colleagues, this is the same crowd that said ObamaCare would lower costs, they pledged it would increase choice, and they promoted the infamous broken promise—if you like your plan, you can keep your plan. They were wrong before, and they are wrong again today.

Moreover, serious ObamaCare solutions from Democrats are hard to find these days. What we have heard recently essentially boils down to this:

No. 1, apply a multibillion-dollar bandaid—no reforms, no changes, just billions more for insurers. That is the game plan of the folks on the other side.

No. 2, quadruple down on ObamaCare and pass a massive expansion of a failed idea that puts bureaucrats in control of nearly every single healthcare decision in the country. The total cost of that so-called single-payer idea could add up to \$32 trillion, according to an estimate of a leading proposal.

These are not serious solutions that Americans need to solve the real problems before us, but if Democrats would like to offer these ideas, then let's open debate on the underlying legislation so they can do that. I am sure Members will have more ideas about how we can improve this draft. The only way for anyone—Democrat, Republican, or Independent—to have that opportunity is to vote yes on opening the debate.

We expect an updated projection from the Congressional Budget Office early next week. Once that is released, we will have the opportunity to vote on the motion to proceed. That is the only way by which everyone will be able to come to the floor, share their ideas,

and have their voices heard through both robust debate and a robust amendment process.

I remain disappointed that our Democratic friends made clear early on that they did not want to engage in a serious, bipartisan effort to solve this issue. But they have a renewed opportunity to engage now. I hope they will take it. I hope every Senator will vote to open debate because that is how we change the status quo.

This is our opportunity to really make a difference on healthcare. This is our chance to bring about changes we have been talking about since ObamaCare was forced on the American people. It is our time to finally build the bridge away from ObamaCare's failures and deliver relief to those who need it.

Failure to act means more families get hurt as it continues to collapse. It also means the law's problems will grow more formidable, making them even harder to solve. That is not something any of us should be comfortable with.

So it is time to rise to the occasion. The American people deserve better than the pain of ObamaCare. They deserve better care, and the time to deliver that for them is next week.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, after 2 weeks of delay, we have now seen the revised Republican TrumpCare bill. It appears that little has changed to the core of the bill.

The Republican TrumpCare bill still slashes Medicaid. The cuts are every bit as draconian as they were in the previous version—a devastating blow to rural hospitals, to Americans in nursing homes, to those struggling with opioid addiction, and so many more. The Republican TrumpCare bill still allows insurers to charge older Americans five times or more than they charge younger Americans. Premiums for so many people aged 55 to 64 will go way up. Americans in their sixties could be paying tens of thousands of dollars more than they do today. The Republican TrumpCare bill still blocks funding to Planned Parenthood, limiting access to affordable healthcare for millions of women.