

So what is new in the bill? Well, it appears that Republicans have included a new \$60 billion tax break on health savings accounts, which only benefits those wealthy enough to afford putting money into them. For Americans who are struggling to pay for insurance coverage, for the average family who sits down on a Friday evening and says: How are we going to pay our existing bills, and for middle-income families who struggle to make ends meet, a tax break on health savings accounts will not help. It will only help wealthier Americans, who sometimes use these accounts as tax shelters.

It appears the Republican TrumpCare bill includes something like the Cruz amendment, which makes the overall bill even worse than before. The Cruz amendment causes costs to go up by letting insurers sell cut-rate insurance policies with lower premiums but huge, huge deductibles and copays, so that out-of-pocket costs would actually go up, not down, even if premiums are lower.

The Cruz amendment drives Americans with preexisting conditions into markets with unaffordable coverage. They virtually would have no coverage at all. Even Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY said the amendment would likely “annihilate the pre-existing condition requirement.” The Cruz amendment will likely cause death spirals in the insurance markets for Americans who need coverage the most. Even the conservative American Action Forum said the Cruz amendment is “the definition of a death spiral.”

From what we are seeing, the new Republican TrumpCare bill is every bit as mean as the old one, and, in one big way, it is even meaner, with the addition of something like the Cruz amendment.

Moderate Republicans looking at this bill should be able to see that the incredibly modest changes to the tax provisions—the small pot of funding for opioid abuse treatment and these other tweaks around the edges—are like a drop in the bucket compared to what the bill does to Medicaid, to seniors, and to Americans with preexisting conditions. It is clear that the core of this bill will remain until the bitter end.

So a vote on the motion to proceed will be a vote on the core of this bill. It is a vote on the idea that middle-class Americans and seniors should pay more for less healthcare. It is a vote on the idea that it should be harder for the neediest Americans to afford healthcare. It is a vote on the idea that corporations and special interests deserve another tax break.

If you are for that idea, vote yes on the motion to proceed. But my Republican friends should not be tempted by the promise of amendments to fix this bill. It is clear that the Republican leadership wants and needs to keep the core of this bill—a dagger to the heart of Medicaid and tax giveaways for corporations and special interests—to the bitter end.

Republicans keep talking about needing to change the status quo on healthcare, but you don't change the status quo to make it worse. That is what this bill would do. This is far, far worse than the status quo. We, Republicans and Democrats, can work together to actually improve our healthcare system, to stabilize the marketplaces, and to reduce the costs that average Americans pay for their healthcare, particularly for prescription drugs.

We can do it, but my Republican friends need to abandon this wrong-headed, partisan, behind-closed-doors approach, and they ought to do it on the motion to proceed next week.

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, we Democrats sent a letter to our Republican colleagues laying out our principles on appropriations so that Republicans would know exactly where we stand and we could avoid the possibility of their shutting down the government. We have three principles: relief from damaging sequestration cuts, parity between defense and jobs and economic growth funding, and no poison pill riders, like the ineffective border wall. These are the same principles we laid out during the last budget negotiation, which resulted in a strong and bipartisan package.

But on Tuesday—which is why I am on the floor speaking—the House Appropriations Committee released a draft of its Homeland Security bill, which includes funding for an unnecessary, ineffective, and expensive border wall with Mexico, paid for by American taxpayers, breaking the President's promise, repeatedly given, that Mexico would pay for it. The bill also funds an unacceptable deportation force and unnecessary detention beds.

The President's budget calls for funding a new eminent domain strike force—a team of Trump lawyers that the administration wants to send to the border to take private land away from the American people to build this wall. This proposal has met with stiff resistance from homeowners living in border communities. Republicans and Democrats on both sides of the aisle have rightfully come out against this proposal. Not a single border State Republican supports the idea. The Senate should reject it outright.

If House Republicans keep on this path—the path of these poison pill amendments and dramatic cuts in programs that help working Americans—I fear they are steering us toward a train wreck.

Remember, the President said he wanted a shutdown. He tweeted earlier this year: “Our country needs a good ‘shutdown’ in September to fix mess!” He wants one. His budget director, Mick Mulvaney, has always been for a shutdown. By including border wall funding in their proposal and dramatically cutting domestic spending, House

Republicans, unfortunately, are playing right into their game.

I urge my Republican colleagues, please, let cooler heads prevail. To my Republican friends in the Senate, I would say persuade your colleagues in the House to abandon this dangerous, irresponsible path they put us on, which can only lead to a government shutdown. I guess they want it.

We should be working together on a responsible way forward on appropriations, in line with the principles we laid out which produced a successful bipartisan deal on the last budget.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, as public servants, I have always thought it is our duty to serve with dignity, integrity, and fairness to the best of our abilities. No matter where you are from or how we got here, the citizens of our States have sent us to Washington with the hope that we will do what is best for them. We hold the public's trust, and that is something that should guide us in everything we do.

Last week, I was home in Michigan for the Fourth of July. My family and other Michiganders celebrated and honored those who had fought for our independence and those who continue to defend our sacred freedom. Our American democracy is rooted in the promise of freedom and equal opportunity for every American. Our resilient Nation has persevered because of shared commitment to do what is right, even if we don't always agree on how to get there.

While home last week I had the opportunity to speak to many Michiganders and hear what was on their mind. They had a whole range of topics on their mind, but the No. 1 issue I heard was about the proposed Republican healthcare bill. Some were angry, some were confused, but most were simply scared. They are scared for their children, they are scared for their spouses, they are scared for their aging parents, and many are scared about what this bill could mean for their own health and well-being.

I wish to highlight a few of the stories shared with me in recent days. Susan from Clawson, MI, shared her unfortunate story about when she fell on hard times, unexpectedly lost her small business and with it her income.

Susan, despite all of her hard work in the past, no longer had the resources to obtain private health insurance. During this time—and it was an extremely stressful time—she also discovered she had an unidentified lump on her breast. Through some research and the help of friends, Susan was able to enroll in Medicaid and get the treatment for what she discovered was a very aggressive but treatable form of cancer.

Without Medicaid, Susan may not have gotten the treatment she needed and may have lost her life. Nobody

takes pleasure in sharing such deeply personal stories, but Susan wants to be sure anyone that who finds themselves in such a difficult position has the support she had.

I appreciate her bravery in beating cancer and her willingness to share this very personal experience.

Alayna from Southfield, MI, shared that she was diagnosed with a rare tumor almost a year ago. Alayna serves as a minister of music in her church in downtown Detroit and enjoys working with children through various local programs. Alayna works part time and her husband works full time, often 70 hours per week. Neither has healthcare benefits through their employers.

Alayna and her husband were able to obtain coverage through the ACA marketplace, a plan she would not have been able to purchase without the Affordable Care Act. Alayna is rightfully terrified by the Republican plan and said she would probably be dead without the affordable coverage she received under the Affordable Care Act, leaving her husband and her 5-year-old daughter behind.

Matt, from Waterford, was unable to get health insurance before the ACA due to two preexisting conditions. After obtaining healthcare through the Affordable Care Act, he discovered one of his preexisting conditions had led to cancer in his digestive tract. Matt is convinced the ACA literally saved his life and that he would not have been able to afford the care he needs otherwise.

Hearing the stories of Matt, Susan, Alayna, and countless other Michiganders like them, I feel the need to remind this body that these individuals are our neighbors. They are husbands and wives and fathers and mothers. Illnesses or emergencies can happen to anyone. Ministers get sick. Students get sick. Small business owners get sick.

Matt didn't choose to be born with a preexisting condition, Susan didn't ask for breast cancer, and Alayna's tumor could have been on any one of us.

Last week, we honored our country's fight for independence, our Nation's brave Founders, and all who have sacrificed to build our Nation by working toward a more perfect union to ensure America is the land of opportunity for all.

The healthcare bill Republicans have written goes against the very values we honor and cherish. It does not bring us closer to opportunity for all. When the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office concludes that the Republican bill will leave millions of people uninsured, that should send a strong signal to all of us that we need to go back to the drawing board.

About an hour ago, my Republican colleagues released additional last-minute changes to their healthcare bill, intended to win over a few more votes within their party—changes that were drafted behind closed doors and

without input from the American public, the very people we represent. In their rush to get this bill done quickly, my colleagues have not fully considered how this proposal will impact their constituents.

Healthcare stakeholders and our Nation's insurers have told Republicans this latest change will still cause premiums for older Americans and those with preexisting conditions to skyrocket. It will still increase the number of Americans without health insurance by millions.

We should be working on bipartisan legislation that will truly improve our healthcare system by increasing insurance coverage while bringing down cost, not forcing a vote next week on legislation that is seriously flawed.

I ask my Republican colleagues to listen to their fellow Americans, Americans who are scared of what this bill will mean for them and for their families. I ask my Republican colleagues to listen to the people calling their office every single day and even traveling here to Washington, DC, to speak out against this bill. I ask my colleagues to listen to the independent experts and healthcare stakeholders who have said, in no uncertain terms, that this bill will cost millions of people their health insurance and could cost thousands of Americans their very lives.

I ask my colleagues to remember why they came to Washington in the first place. I ask my colleagues to step back and ask themselves some tough questions. Will this bill help people or will it hurt people? What will this bill mean for rural hospitals in their State, for lifesaving addiction treatments, for preventive care that saves lives and taxpayer dollars? Does this bill hold true to the important American values of fairness, freedom, and equal opportunity for all?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, we should scrap this bill, start over, and work together, in a bipartisan way, to bring down healthcare costs and improve the quality of care available to every American, no matter who they are or where they live.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Hagerty nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of William Francis Hagerty IV, of Tennessee, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Japan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, let me begin by reviewing the threats the United States is facing around the world today. The campaign against ISIS is far from over. We must build on the success of retaking Mosul and ensure an enduring defeat of terrorist threats in Iraq and Syria and throughout the region.

Every day we learn more about Russia's asymmetric capabilities—from cyber attacks to disinformation campaigns—even as they modernize their military, occupy Crimea, destabilize Ukraine, and threaten our NATO allies. China continues to militarize the South China Sea and modernize its own military at an alarming rate. North Korea gets ever closer to developing the capability to strike the U.S. homeland with a nuclear-armed missile.

I could spend a lot of time going through all of the threats we face. We are at war. We are at war. There are brave young men and women serving in Afghanistan, as I speak. Some of them have been wounded and killed. We must always ask ourselves: Are we really doing all we can to support them?

Our military is facing a crisis. Years of budget cuts from this Congress have failed our men and women in uniform. In order to rebuild the military, the Pentagon needs to ramp up readiness programs and embark on an ambitious plan for modernization to make sure our servicemembers are given the training, resources, and capabilities they need. To do that, the Department of Defense must have senior leadership.

The position of Deputy Secretary of State is one of the most critical positions in our government. It is essentially the chief operating officer of the largest, most complex organization in the world—the Department that is entrusted with ensuring our national security.

Patrick Shanahan is a well-qualified nominee who passed out of the Armed Services Committee on a voice vote. This body voted overwhelmingly, 98 to 1, to confirm General Mattis as Secretary of Defense. He had our overwhelming support to lead the Department during challenging times. Yet we have not given Secretary Mattis the senior leadership he needs to help him do his job.

Tomorrow, I say to my colleagues, the current Deputy Secretary of Defense, Bob Work, will leave his office. There simply is no more time to delay moving the nomination of Patrick Shanahan. You can choose to vote no, you can choose to vote yes, but let's just vote. The obstruction has gone on long enough, and it has to stop.

I wish to say, I understand the frustration my colleagues on the other side of the aisle feel with the process we have been through, particularly on the issue of healthcare. The issue of healthcare should have gone through