

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