

Housing developed there. Businesses developed there. They restored and revitalized distressed areas of the city.

A recent example is the restoration of the German American Building by Mosaic Life Care in the St. Joseph downtown area. That is a building that wouldn't have been able to be saved without some special assistance, which was made available because of historic tax credits. Again, not only was the historic building saved, but all of the services that were already there and served that building that wasn't being used now serve a building that is being used, and they don't have to be replaced.

The bottom line is that this is a bill that will create a better future for American families and a better future for American jobs. This is an opportunity to do something that is hard to do, and it only gets done once every 25 to 30 years. This is the moment. It is time to do this.

We will have a debate on the floor that allows everybody to make every reasonable amendment. I don't mean reasonable in that it might be reasonable to do it, but reasonable in that it deals with taxes and you figure out some way to pay for it. So you do something here, and you add something there. That is what this debate will be. We have talked about this topic now for years and intensely for months. It is time to get this job done. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senator from Michigan.

HEALTHCARE

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President. I actually am going to speak for a moment about something other than the tax provisions, but I have to say, with my friend from Missouri on the floor—and I do mean my friend from Missouri—that we may not agree on the tax provisions, but we do agree on what I am going to be talking about today, which is community health centers and children's health insurance. I am hopeful that, as the Senator was speaking about new market tax credits—which I support strongly—and historic preservations, they don't get hurt in this process at all. I know there is work to do on this to make sure it doesn't happen, but I appreciate working very closely with my colleague and friend from Missouri on what I want to talk about today.

I rise today to draw attention to the way the Senate majority is failing children and families in Michigan and all across the country. It now has been 60 days—nearly 2 months—since Republicans let funding expire for the Children's Health Insurance Program and community health centers—60 days. It doesn't have to be this way because we have bipartisan support to be able to continue the funding for both of these programs.

We also can't say that we haven't had time. During these 60 days, Republican

leadership has found time for us to work on plenty of other issues. They passed their budget. They have taken 75 floor votes. Republicans introduced their tax plan, which is now before us, and we are spending time this week on that. And, by the way, they rewrote their tax plan in a way that would cause 13 million people to lose their health insurance. The Senate has considered 24 nominees, but Republicans haven't taken any action to ensure that the 9 million children who have health insurance from the Children's Health Insurance Program can continue to get medical care, even though we have bipartisan support.

In the middle of all of the division going on right now on the floor, we could bring something to the floor that would have bipartisan support and do the right thing for families and for children and make sure that we are taking away the anxiety that families are feeling now across the country about what is going to happen. There are 9 million children right now at risk because of inaction.

CHIP provides children from low- and moderate-income working families with affordable healthcare. These are families who are working. They don't qualify for other kinds of help. These are working families who sometimes have one job, sometimes two jobs, or part-time jobs, and they trying to hold it together. They want to be able to take their child to the doctor. They want the peace of mind that comes from knowing that if their child gets hurt or if they get sick, they can take them to a doctor.

In addition, the Senate majority hasn't taken any action on another very important community healthcare program to ensure that 25 million people who count on community health centers will continue to have a place to go when they get hurt, when they get sick, to take their child, and to take their parents.

Included among those 25 million patients are 300,000 of our veterans—300,000 veterans—and 7.5 million children that rely on health centers in our communities.

I have often said that healthcare is personal not political. There is nothing more personal than waking up in the middle of the night because your child is crying and they are sick. There is nothing more personal than worrying about whether you are going to be able to get them the care they need. There is nothing more personal than wanting to know that you have a healthcare provider in your community who can help you or a family member manage your chronic conditions—high blood pressure, diabetes, and other things—so that you don't find yourself getting sicker and sicker and sicker.

Healthcare is personal not political, and each one of these 9 million children and 25 million Americans are being personally let down by this inaction.

As I indicated before, it doesn't have to be this way. We can take action

today. We have bipartisan support right now, and bipartisan cosponsorship right now. We could stop the divisive debate and take a moment to do something really important for families and children before the holiday season. Right now we can ensure that families and children know that the Children's Health Insurance Program will continue in the new year and that they are going to be able to go to their community health center and get the care they need for themselves and their families.

I was really proud of the fact that Senator HATCH, our distinguished chairman of the Finance Committee, and Senator WYDEN, our distinguished ranking member, and all of us on the Committee came together to put together a bipartisan Children's Health Insurance Program extension for 5 years. It came out of Committee with only one Senator voting no.

I was hoping that it was going to get done right away. Why wouldn't it? It is something that could sail through here. In addition to that, 70 Members of this body, led by Senator BLUNT and myself, have signed a letter of support for continuing funding for community health centers. Now, Senator BLUNT and I have put in bipartisan legislation with eight other Democrats and 8 other Republicans to extend funding for 5 years.

I know if this came up on the floor, we could get this done today and ease the worries of families that are beginning to get notices across the country that the health insurance for themselves and their children is going to run out.

These programs have long had strong bipartisan support. Why can't we get the action on this that these families and children deserve? Instead, families continue to wait every day—60 days.

I truly thought back in September that this was something that would be enough of a priority that it could get done amidst all the other things that have been brought to the floor of the Senate. But now the clock ticks every day—every day. This is wrong. We need to put these children and these families first.

We might be 60 days late, but there is no reason we can't act today or tomorrow—before the end of the week—to make these children and families a top priority.

Before CHIP, too many hard-working families in Michigan couldn't afford to take their children to the doctor. Today, 100,000 children are covered by MICHild, which is what we call our Children's Health Insurance Program—100,000 children.

With all the efforts to provide affordable healthcare that are going on in Michigan right now—successful efforts—97 percent of the children in Michigan today can now see a doctor—97 percent. They are, at the moment, not having to go to an emergency room and wait hours and hours and hours or have their parents try to figure out

what they can do to help them when they get sick. So 97 percent of our children can now see a doctor, and that is the highest level ever, and we should be proud of that. That is a good thing.

Yet, unless Congress acts soon, MICHild will begin running out of funding as early as January, which is not very far away. Happy New Year. Lose your health insurance.

January will also be a bad month for Michigan's community health centers. Nearly 20,000 people will lose access to healthcare. Some 20,000 people in Michigan who now are able to go to a community health center would see that access to healthcare go away, with thousands more dropped each month.

Last year, Michigan's community health centers treated more than 680,000 patients—680,000 people—including 12,710 of our veterans. They diagnosed coronary artery disease in more than 21,000 people. Nearly 34,000 Michigan residents were diagnosed with asthma and began to get help. Nearly 140,000 people were diagnosed with diabetes and could get help. All of those health conditions can be managed—we know that—if you have access to a doctor, to nurses, and to medications. You can manage those kinds of chronic diseases. However, they can be deadly if they are undiagnosed and untreated.

Just ask William. He didn't have a regular doctor after moving to Jackson, MI, from Chicago, but one morning he knew he needed one. He woke up feeling light-headed. So he went to the Center for Family Health, a great facility. They discovered that William's blood pressure was high—so high, in fact, that he was in danger of having a heart attack or a stroke. It took about a year for William's doctors to find the right combination of medications to control his blood pressure, but they were able to do that. He has been getting his care at the Center for Family Health ever since. They literally saved his life.

Emily from Rochester Hills has her own story about the Children's Health Insurance Program. Emily's dad was laid off from two separate jobs within 3 years at a time when her mom was working a part-time job that didn't provide insurance. That is a very common story for a lot of hard-working folks in Michigan as well as across the country. Thankfully, Emily and her brothers and sisters had health insurance through MICHild. It covered their scoliosis, asthma, a seizure disorder, and typical children's health insurance issues like bronchitis and broken bones. Emily's words are:

The Children's Health Insurance Program was a lifesaver for my siblings and me. . . . I can't imagine the stress that my parents dealt with during that time and how we would have survived so well without the program.

Emily and William know CHIP and community health centers make life-saving differences for people in Michigan as well as across the country.

We are 60 days late, but there is no time like the present to get this done. We are 60 days late, but we don't have to make it 61. Our children and our families should be put at the top of the list for action, not at the bottom. It is time to make things right for the 9 million children who rely on the Children's Health Insurance Program and the 25 million people who use community health centers.

We shouldn't let one more day go by without acting. We can do this now. There is bipartisan support to get this done, and our children and our families deserve to have this done as quickly as possible.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

TAX REFORM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I know I don't need to tell anybody that American families have had a tough time in recent years. Weak economic growth, stagnant wages, and a lack of opportunities have left many Americans struggling just to get by.

To put a fine point on that, during the entire years of the Obama Presidency, there wasn't a single year wherein the growth rate and the economy exceeded 3 percent. If we go back to the end of World War II, average economic growth in this country has averaged somewhere in the 3 to 3.5 percent range. So in the entire 8 years of the Obama Presidency, there was not a single year—not one year—where economic growth exceeded 3 percent.

What did that mean for American workers? It meant that their wages stayed flat. In many cases, up until just recently, American families haven't had a pay raise for the better part of a decade as a result. It has been a sluggish, anemic, slow-growth economy that wasn't creating the kind of good-paying jobs or the wage levels that enabled American families to benefit from increasing incomes.

A recent survey found that 50 percent of Americans consider themselves to be living paycheck to paycheck. That makes perfect sense if we look at the economic statistics, economic record of the past 8 years. About one-third of those same Americans say they are just \$400 away from a financial crisis.

Real help is on the way. This week, we will bring the Senate version of comprehensive tax reform to the Senate floor. The legislation we have produced will provide immediate, direct relief to hard-working Americans, but that is not what we are hearing from Democrats. Here is what we are hearing Democrats say about the Senate plan—and I will just contrast that with the facts, what is really true. Here is what we have heard: The Republicans have somehow drafted this secret tax plan behind closed doors and are forcing it through the voting process much too fast.

No doubt we have heard this as well: The Senate tax bill raises taxes on

lower and middle-income, middle-class Americans while cutting taxes for the rich.

Here is an interesting attack that is coming from my colleagues on the other side as well who have, in the past, not been considered budget hawks: The Senate tax bill somehow is a budget buster that irresponsibly increases the deficit.

First off, let me address that question. The answer to the deficit question is that this is a \$5.5 trillion tax cut. Seventy percent of the tax cut is paid for by ending loopholes and special exemptions in the Tax Code today—what we call base broadeners—broadening the base by doing away with some of the preferences that exist in the code today.

The Joint Committee on Taxation says that with a static score, we will have about a \$1.4 trillion delta to cover. Assuming that we use current tax policy—and we normally do extend current tax policy—we believe the remaining cost of the tax cut will be covered through increased economic growth.

What does that mean? What kind of growth do we have to achieve in the economy in order to have the kind of growth that would enable this tax relief above and beyond what we have done in terms of base broadeners and pay-fors to be covered?

Just to put it in perspective, the Congressional Budget Office is assuming and forecasting 1.8 percent growth over the next 10 years. Again, as I mentioned earlier, we didn't have good growth over the last 8 years in the Obama administration. We were averaging 1.5 to 2 percent growth. The Congressional Budget Office is forecasting currently 1.8 percent growth for the next 10 years.

Well, I can't believe that growth rate would be acceptable to people in this country—the greatest economy on the face of the Earth growing at less than 2 percent a year. That cannot be the new normal. We have to do better than that.

If we get just 2.2 to 2.4 percent growth with this bill, we will have covered the remaining cost of the tax cut. The amount I pointed out earlier is not covered in terms of base broadeners and pay-fors and offsets, but it assumes a certain reasonable amount of growth—just the growth necessary to cover the cost of that tax cut—which is 2.2 to 2.4 percent. Again, to put it in perspective, going back to the end of World War II, the economy in this country has averaged 3 to 3.5 percent growth. It is only in the last decade, where we have had heavy taxes and heavy regulations and policies that have created conditions that are not favorable for that kind of growth, where we have gotten stuck with this malaise of 1.5 to 2 percent. So if we can just get 2.2 to 2.4 percent growth in the economy, we will cover the remaining cost of this tax cut.

In reality, when my colleagues on the other side of the aisle say that this is