

America looking for a better life, who work and follow the law and contribute.

By ignoring their plight, by not prioritizing the Dream Act, Republicans are telling them they are just not important enough.

I simply can't accept this and ask my Republican colleagues to look into their hearts and find their compassion. Tell these young people they are safe. Tell them they deserve to stay and the Dream Act will pass.

This bill also fails to provide long-term funding stability for the Children's Health Insurance Program and for community health centers. Both of these programs are vital to our communities and provide healthcare for millions of Americans.

CHIP provides health coverage for nearly 9 million children. In California, 1.3 million are currently enrolled in the program and around 2 million are covered at some point during the year.

This program is absolutely critical to support children in working families that are moderate income and can't afford private coverage. Around a quarter of kids on CHIP have special healthcare needs.

I have been hearing from my constituents about how important this program is.

Rachel, from Orange, wrote me to say, "There are many who depend on this assistance to stay alive. I was a type 1 diabetic at 12 with two disabled parents. If not for governmental assistance, I would be dead. Don't leave someone in this same situation hopeless."

Kathleen from Arcata wrote to me and said, "I am a single mom and though my kids are grown now, I had the CHIP for them. I can't imagine what it would be like to raise a child living in similar circumstances now without this program."

CHIP is also an important program for pregnant women. In California, 30,000 expecting mothers depend on the program.

This care is so important for ensuring healthy moms and babies. If funding lapses, these expectant mothers are at risk of losing their coverage.

Funding for community health centers is also at risk.

There are more than 10,400 centers that see more than 25 million patients across the country.

In California, we have more than 1,500 centers that care for more than 4.4 million patients each year in California. If we don't provide long-term funding for these centers, there is no doubt they will have to limit hours, lay off staff, or even close.

Supporting community health centers isn't just the right thing to do for access, but for positive outcomes and cost-effectiveness as well.

Health center patients have an 18 percent lower rate of emergency room visits. Medicaid patients receiving care at health centers have costs that are 24 percent lower, and the quality of care

is exceptional. Patients do better, and it costs less.

For all the talk about bipartisan support for these two programs, I am profoundly disappointed that we have not addressed their funding in a meaningful way.

Healthcare coverage for kids and access to basic healthcare services in our communities should be a no-brainer. I strongly support these programs and hope we can provide stability soon.

In conclusion, this has been a bad year for governance, and it is being capped off by yet another disappointing display by Republicans.

All of us saw and heard the thousands of Dreamers who visited our offices. We saw not only their passion but also their desire to make a difference.

Many of these young people live in fear every day.

Congress has a chance to improve their lives and provide for them a positive, productive future.

Republicans have chosen to ignore truly time-sensitive issues like DACA, CHIP, and basic government funding. Instead, they chose to spend months on tax cuts for rich Americans and big corporations.

Tax cuts for rich people aren't time-sensitive. Protecting children is.

Let's get back on track, let's add the Dream Act and CHIP to this bill, and let's return to the good governance that our people expect.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

DEFICITS

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, the question is, Do deficits matter? We often say they do. You will hear Republicans say they do, and for the last week or two, you have heard from Democrats that they were against cutting taxes because it might add to the deficit. Well, if this is true, tonight we will get a chance to vote on the deficit because, you see, Congress about 6 years ago, put something forward called pay-go budget caps. What does that mean? They kept seeing the deficit explode. So they put in these budget caps, and if we were to adhere to them, we would actually get the debt under control. Guess what. Congress has evaded them 29 times.

So tonight we will have a bill, and it will be the 30th time that Congress has evaded their own rules on the debt. Is it any surprise that the debt under George W. Bush went from \$5 trillion to \$10 trillion? Is it any surprise that under President Obama it went from \$10 trillion to \$20 trillion? Is it any surprise that the debt continues to rise? No, because both parties are responsible for it.

Look, I was all for the tax cut. I think it is good for the country, but I am also for restraining spending. So we did the tax cut earlier in the week, and now we are going to do a spending bill. We have rules in place, and the rules in

place say that there are budget caps. So they have a special little waiver that they have put in the spending bills because we are now going to exceed those caps.

So the question is, Are we serious about the debt? Are we serious about adding a million dollars a minute to the debt? That is what happens. We borrow a million dollars a minute. The deficit this year will be over \$700 billion—\$20 trillion in total. The total debt is bigger than our entire economy.

So both sides give lip service to it, and yet both sides want more spending. On the Republican side, this year's request is \$80 billion above the caps for military. On the Democratic side, they say: Well, you don't get yours unless we get ours. Yet nobody cares about the debt. So really the debt is being driven by the GOP, who want more military money but the only way they can get it is giving the Democrats more welfare money.

So the interesting thing about this vote is—you have heard the other side of the aisle saying it—they can't vote for the tax cut because of the debt. If they care about the debt, let's cut spending. This is their chance. This will be a vote on cutting spending. These pay-go budget caps were put in place by the Democrats when they were in the majority in 2010. These are their budget caps, and yet everybody is clamoring to waive them on both sides.

We have a real problem in our country, and we must do something about it. Ultimately, there will be a day of reckoning. You cannot continue to borrow so much money. Ultimately, it bankrupts the Nation, or the currency becomes worthless, or you get to a point where the interest on the debt actually becomes the No. 1 spending item. Within about a decade, interest will push out all other spending, and it will be the No. 1 item. We will spend more on interest than national defense. We will spend more on interest than welfare and anything else. So there are those who say: Well, we have to have more money for military; we have to have more money for welfare. You are going to have none of that if you keep spending money at this rate because we are going to ruin the country through debt.

So can we have a strong military? Yes. We spend about \$600 billion, but you can't necessarily spend \$700 billion. That extra \$100 billion is making the debt worse. But it is the same on the other side of the ledger with the Democrats.

So we have a chance. There really is a chance. The media would say: Oh, you are irresponsible for voting for the tax cuts. No, you are irresponsible if you are not also willing to vote for spending cuts.

So tonight I will put forward in a few minutes a motion, and this motion will be to say that we should obey the spending caps. We have put them in place. Unless our outrage over debt is fake outrage, if we truly care about the

debt, we should vote to keep in place the rules we have put in place. These are spending caps. If we care about the next generation, we should vote for the spending caps. So I will put forward a motion that says: Let's obey our own rules.

It will be interesting to watch the vote and to see how it turns out—who truly cares about the debt on either side of the aisle, who is willing to say: You know what; I am for tax cuts but I am also for saying across the board that we need to have spending restraint. Will we obey our own rules? We have broken our own rules. This will be the 30th time we broke our own rules on budget caps since 2010. If you go back farther, it is in the hundreds of times. If you were scoring Congress on integrity and honesty about the rules we have set up, it would be a zero. We aren't adhering to our own rules.

So what I would admonish my colleagues to do is, if they care about debt, is to vote for this point of order that says that we should adhere to our budget caps and we should really truly care about the budget deficit.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

MEDICARE FUNDING

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise in strong opposition to the point of order that will be offered by the Senator from Kentucky, which would have the effect of allowing harmful, indiscriminate budget cuts to be triggered. While there are certain safety net programs like Medicaid, food stamps, and Social Security that are exempt from these automatic cuts, the Medicare Program is not exempt, and there are a number of other vital programs in addition to Medicare, including Federal education programs, agricultural support for farmers, and funding for Citizenship and Immigration Services, among others, that would be subject to immediate automatic cuts if we failed to take action tonight to avert that outcome.

It has been deeply disturbing to me to see seniors frightened about the possibility that a \$25 billion cut in Medicare—that is a 4-percent reduction—would be automatically triggered. By waiving this point of order, we will prevent such cuts from taking place, reassuring our Nation's seniors and their loved ones.

Although the law that could cause this reduction has been waived some 16 times—and indeed never implemented since it was enacted—I felt that it was essential that our leaders publicly commit that Medicare reductions would not be triggered, given the amount of fear, anxiety, and misinformation that is out there.

I wrote to the Senate majority leader, urging that we immediately remove the threat of an automatic cut in Medicare's funding. In response, I am pleased to say that both the majority

leader and the Speaker of the House released a joint statement that pledged this will not happen, and that is the issue before us tonight.

Medicare provides essential healthcare benefits to our Nation's seniors. We must remove, immediately, the threat that an automatic reduction in the program's funding could occur, which would affect healthcare providers and diminish access that beneficiaries—including our seniors and disabled individuals—have to the services they need.

Earlier this month, AARP sent a letter to the House and the Senate leadership, alluding and supporting my inquiry and warning Congress of the potential consequences. The letter says:

The sudden cut to Medicare provider funding in 2018 would have an immediate and lasting impact, including fewer healthcare providers participating in Medicare and reduced access to care for Medicare beneficiaries. Healthcare providers may choose to stop accepting Medicare patients at a time when the Medicare population is growing by 10,000 new beneficiaries each day. . . . Furthermore, Medicare Advantage plans and Part D prescription drug plans may charge higher premiums or cost sharing in future years to make up for these cuts now.

These potential cuts would have an enormous impact on our hospitals, our nursing homes, our home health agencies, and other essential healthcare providers who play a critical role in providing healthcare services and also as important economic drivers in our communities.

It is critical for Congress to act quickly, to act tonight before we go home, so seniors do not have the anxiety of wondering whether the tax bill will somehow negatively affect their healthcare. We can act tonight to remove that anxiety and assure them it will not.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the exchange of letters I had with Majority Leader MCCONNELL and also the letter from AARP be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, November 28, 2017.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER MCCONNELL: I write to express my deep concerns with the Congressional Budget Office's determination that an automatic four percent cut to Medicare, estimated to be roughly \$25 billion for fiscal year 2018, could be triggered by the passage of tax reform legislation as a result of the Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 (PAYGO) even though there is no intention for such a reduction to occur.

Since I do not believe it is anyone's intention to allow automatic cuts to Medicare to occur, I urge swift action to waive the PAYGO requirements. Medicare provides essential benefits to our nation's seniors, and we must remove immediately the threat that an automatic reduction in the program's funding could occur.

Since PAYGO was enacted, sixteen laws that would have otherwise triggered PAYGO's automatic spending cuts have in-

cluded provisions to exclude all or part of the law's budgetary impact, including the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 that was enacted under the previous Administration.

I look forward to working with you to ensure that no Medicare cuts are triggered under PAYGO, a goal I believe is supported by members on both sides of the aisle. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

SUSAN M. COLLINS, U.S. SENATOR.

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, December 1, 2017.

Hon. SUSAN COLLINS,
Dirksen Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR COLLINS: Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the across-the-board spending cuts. You will be pleased to know that Speaker Paul Ryan and I issued the following joint statement earlier today:

"Critics of tax reform are claiming the legislation would lead to massive, across-the-board spending cuts in vital programs—including a 4-percent reduction in Medicare—due to the Pay-Go law enacted in 2010. This will not happen. Congress has readily available methods to waive this law, which has never been enforced since its enactment. There is no reason to believe that Congress would not act again to prevent a sequester, and we will work to ensure these spending cuts are prevented."

Again, thank you.

Sincerely,

MITCH MCCONNELL,
Majority Leader.

AARP®,
December 7, 2017.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
U.S. Senate,
U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC.
Hon. CHARLES E. SCHUMER,
U.S. Senate,
U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC.
Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
House of Representatives,
U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC.
Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
House of Representatives,
U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER MCCONNELL, MINORITY LEADER SCHUMER, SPEAKER RYAN, AND MINORITY LEADER PELOSI: On behalf of our members and all Americans age 50 and older, AARP is writing to express concerns about the potential for automatic cuts to Medicare beginning in January 2018. AARP, with its nearly 38 million members in all 50 States and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, represents millions of individuals whose health care depends on Medicare. We urge you to act now to prevent these cuts to Medicare.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently provided an explanation of the impact H.R. 1 and its \$1.5 trillion deficit increase will have on Medicare and other programs. The CBO estimated that because of statutory pay-as-you-go and the increase in the deficit, Medicare providers will be subject to an automatic \$25 billion cut in fiscal year 2018, and additional cuts in subsequent fiscal years. According to CBO, the automatic cuts, or sequester, would begin as soon as January, 2018.

In a statement responding to Senator Collins's inquiry on statutory pay-as-you-go and the risk of Medicare cuts, Leader McConnell and Speaker Ryan provided the following assurance: "Congress has readily available methods to waive this law, which has never been enforced since its enactment. There is no reason to believe that Congress