

business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

S.J. RES. 63

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, earlier today I voted in support of the resolution offered by Senator BALDWIN to roll back rules adopted in August by the Trump administration that would allow individuals to purchase so-called short-term, limited duration health insurance plans for up to 1 year. The Obama administration had previously limited the duration of such plans to 3 months. I rise now to explain why I chose to support the resolution and, beyond that, to note the critical need to take action to protect individuals who have no other affordable health insurance option.

First, as proponents of the resolution have noted, short-term limited duration plans do not provide protections for enrollees who suffer from pre-existing conditions. As I have often emphasized, it is essential that individuals who suffer from pre-existing conditions are covered. In June of this year, I wrote to Attorney General Sessions urging him to reconsider his decision not to defend provisions protecting individuals with pre-existing conditions in ongoing litigation challenging the Affordable Care Act in Federal court in Texas. As I noted in my letter, striking down these protections is no small matter:

“In 2016, the Kaiser Family Foundation estimated that 27 percent of American adults under age 65 have pre-existing conditions that would leave them uninsurable in the individual market. More recently, 57 percent of Americans responding to a poll said that they, or someone in their household, suffers from a pre-existing condition. These numbers include 590,000 Mainers, roughly 45 percent of the state’s population.”

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my letter be printed in the RECORD immediately following my remarks.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that many individuals lack an affordable health insurance option. For example, individuals who earn more than 400 percent of the Federal poverty level—about \$49,000—are not entitled to the ACA’s premium tax credits and must shoulder the full cost of plans they purchase in the exchange. For a 64-year-old male living in Caribou, ME, this amounts to about \$9,500 for the cheapest bronze plan—or nearly 20 percent of his income—far too expensive. Based on the statistics I have already cited, there is a better than even chance that this individual suffers from a preexisting condition.

Individuals who lose their jobs and their healthcare coverage along with it may also benefit from these plans. If someone is struggling to pay rent or a

mortgage and trying to keep up with other bills, a short-term plan can help them achieve some measure of coverage without compounding their financial worries. There is a role for these plans, and I believe that we should work together to address these real-world situations.

The underlying flaw in the Affordable Care Act is that it does not provide affordable coverage, but I believe this flaw can be addressed without jeopardizing protections for individuals with preexisting conditions. In fact, earlier this year, I offered legislation with my good friend LAMAR ALEXANDER that would have done exactly that. Our bill, would have funded cost-sharing reductions, reformed the section 1332 waiver program, and provided \$30 billion over 3 years to support State reinsurance or invisible high-risk pools—methods proven to reduce rates without discriminating against those with pre-existing conditions. Furthermore, healthcare experts at Oliver Wyman projected that our bill would have lowered individual health insurance premiums in the individual market by as much as 40 percent compared to what people would otherwise pay, while also expanding coverage to an additional 3.2 million individuals.

Unfortunately—and incredibly—when we tried to advance this legislation, the Democratic leaders blocked it.

I remain deeply disappointed that members on the other side of the aisle chose to derail legislation that could have lowered rates for the 18 million Americans who get their health insurance coverage from the individual market. I am also disappointed that we again find ourselves in an “all or nothing, take it or leave it” situation. I can only hope that some of the energy now stoking partisan animosity will be redirected soon toward finding healthcare solutions that work for all Americans.

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

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, June 27, 2018.

Re Texas v. United States, No. 4:18-cv-00167-O (N.D. Tex.).

Hon. JEFF SESSIONS,
Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice,
Washington, DC.

DEAR ATTORNEY GENERAL SESSIONS: I am writing regarding the Department’s recent decision not to defend critical consumer protections in ongoing litigation challenging the Affordable Care Act (ACA) before the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas. I urge you to reconsider your position and to defend these critical protections for individuals with pre-existing conditions like asthma, arthritis, cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

In your June 7, 2018, letter to Speaker Ryan explaining the Department’s decision, you argue that the ACA’s provisions protecting people with pre-existing conditions are not severable from the individual mandate, and cannot survive if that provision is struck down as unconstitutional. Respectfully, I disagree.

This is no small matter. In 2016, the Kaiser Family Foundation estimated that 27 per-

cent of American adults under age 65 have pre-existing conditions that would leave them uninsurable in the individual market. More recently, 57 percent of Americans responding to a poll said that they or someone in their household suffers from a pre-existing condition. These numbers include 590,000 Mainers, roughly 45 percent of the State’s population.

I want to make clear that my concern is to protect individuals with pre-existing conditions, not to defend the individual mandate. Data show that the individual mandate is highly regressive—80 percent of those who pay the fine make less than \$50,000 per year. The Supreme Court was right to find that the individual mandate is not within the powers granted to Congress under the Commerce Clause, and Congress was right in eliminating the individual mandate’s penalty through the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, P.L. 115-97.

I do not dispute your contention that the individual mandate will cease to be constitutional as a tax when it no longer produces revenue, beginning in 2019. But it does not follow that eliminating this penalty requires that important consumer protections—such as provisions ensuring that Americans with pre-existing conditions have access to health insurance—must also fall. In my view, the severability argument you outlined in your letter is focused on the wrong period of time: severability should not be measured by Congress’s intent in 2010, when the Affordable Care Act was passed into law, but rather by Congress’s intent in 2017, when Congress amended it through the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. It is implausible that Congress intended protections for those with pre-existing conditions to stand or fall together with the individual mandate, when Congress affirmatively eliminated the penalty while leaving these critical consumer protections in place. If Congress had intended to eliminate these consumer protections along with the individual mandate, it could have done so. It chose not to.

Your letter states that it is “rare” for the Department to forgo defense of duly enacted statutes. The Department should do its duty and defend the important consumer protections in the ACA, particularly those that ensure that people with pre-existing conditions can secure insurance.

Sincerely,

SUSAN M. COLLINS,
United States Senator.

U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, today I want to once again reaffirm that the U.S. Congress stands firmly behind a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. As threats to Israel continue to increase, as her enemies continue to grow ever closer, the United States will stand firm in our commitments.

Despite partisanship interfering with so many pressing policy issues today, an overwhelming majority of members of all political parties continue to reaffirm congressional support for this relationship.

Congress continues to fully fund the unprecedented \$38 billion of memorandum of understanding for military aid and will continue to do so on a bipartisan basis.

Congress continues to authorize and fund missile codevelopment programs, like Iron Dome, David’s Sling, and Arrow 3, and will continue to do so on a bipartisan basis.

Congress passed the Taylor Force Act, making clear that the United States will not provide assistance that directly benefits the Palestinian Authority until it stops incentivizing violence by paying salaries to prisoners convicted of terrorism against Israeli or American citizens.

Should there be any question about where the entirety of the U.S. Senate—Democrats and Republicans—stand, all 100 Senators signed a letter calling for Israel's inclusion in the Global Entry Program.

Our relationship with Israel is rooted in this bipartisanship. We are stronger for it, and so is Israel. It is disappointing to see some try to drive a political wedge in this historical support.

Those who would try to use Israel or support for the U.S.-Israel relationship as a political football are not helping this relationship, nor are they helping promote either American or Israeli security. Along with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, I will continue to be a vocal advocate for a robust U.S.-Israel relationship rooted in strong bipartisan support.

90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LOEW'S THEATER BUILDING

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I join the city of Providence and the State of Rhode Island in celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Loew's Theatre Building, home of the Providence Center for the Performing Arts. From silent films to the Mighty Wurlitzer to live concerts and Broadway productions, the Loew's Theatre Building has delighted, educated, and entertained generations of Rhode Islanders.

On October 6, 1928, the theater opened its doors to more than 14,000 people who came to see its splendor and the silent film "Excess Baggage." Designed by the renowned theater architects George and C.W. Rapp, the Loew's Theatre featured marble columns, gilded plasterwork, and crystal chandeliers.

After early years of success, the theater saw a decline in its economic fortunes as movie attendance waned. The theater sustained damage during the hurricanes of 1938 and 1954 and barely escaped demolition in the 1970s. Fortunately, local leaders stepped in to save this landmark. In 1977, the Loew's Theatre Building was officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the following year, a non-profit organization was founded to restore its luster and establish a performing arts center for the community to enjoy.

Today the Providence Performing Arts Center is a hub of cultural activity. It not only brings top-flight productions to town but also offers a broad selection of community outreach programs, fulfilling its mission of serving "the entertainment needs of the State's various populations by presenting the widest possible variety of arts and cultural events." The center

presents free, community concerts featuring the Mighty Wurlitzer, the rare 1927 pipe organ, one of only three ever made. There is a seats for servicemembers initiative that offers preferred orchestra seating to our military families. There are arts scholarships, summer theater programs, and special opportunities for students to experience live theater productions.

Ninety years ago, Rhode Islanders flocked to the Loew's Theatre Building to share in something grand. We are grateful for the steady leadership and many contributions of the board of directors, dedicated staff, and generous benefactors who have made this historic landmark a living institution that continues to enrich the cultural life of our community. The Providence Performing Arts Center is still grand. May it continue to be so for generations to come.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO LISA C. FREEMAN

• Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Lisa C. Freeman for becoming the first female president of Northern Illinois University, NIU.

Lisa C. Freeman was appointed president of NIU in September of 2018, becoming the first permanent female president in NIU's 123-year history. She has been a member of NIU's senior leadership team and a professor of biology since 2010. She became executive vice president and provost in May 2014. Throughout her time at NIU, Freeman has worked to support all aspects of the university's mission, emphasizing NIU's continued commitments to promoting the social mobility of students, producing high impact scholarship, and engaging with the region. Prior to joining NIU, Freeman dedicated 16 years to serving as a faculty member at Kansas State University. She also served as the associate vice president for innovation for K-State Olathe.

Freeman has been widely recognized for her important contributions to her professions. Among those honors and awards are Outstanding Veterinarian of the Year, 2002, Castle Bank Community Leader, 2015, and the NIU Trans-Action Ally, 2018.

I commend Lisa's hard work, passion, and commitment to inspiring and empowering our next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs, educators, artists, engineers, and professionals. May her continued leadership serve as an inspiration to us all.●

160TH ANNIVERSARY OF YWCA USA

• Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I want to proudly applaud the work of YWCA USA as they celebrate an incredible milestone. For 160 years, they have been at the forefront of the Nation's most critical movements. They have led the charge in women's em-

powerment, the fight against racism and discrimination, and efforts to strengthen families and communities. From voting rights to civil rights, from affordable housing to pay equity, from violence prevention to healthcare reform, YWCA has been a force for progress for 160 years.

With the help of 210 local associations, across 46 States and the District of Columbia, this organization continues to serve over 2 million women, girls, and their families each year. Being one of the largest networks for domestic violence and sexual assault services in the country, the YWCA reaches over half a million women and girls annually. Furthermore, community YWCA associations reach over 260,000 women with economic empowerment programs and over 160,000 people through their racial justice education and training programs.

In my home State of North Dakota, the YWCA Cass Clay and the YWCA Minot have been a trusted place for women and children to turn as they escape violence, homelessness, and crisis. Through these services, they are fulfilling their mission to provide safety, security, and hope to those who need it most.

When I came to the Senate, the Violence Against Women Act, or VAWA, was the first bill that I cosponsored, and I am proud that it worked to give victims of abuse the resources they need to seek justice and recover from the trauma they experienced. I am still working to prevent those programs from expiring, and I am proud that the North Dakota chapters of YWCA have helped protect women and children, especially in the continuing crisis of violence against women in tribal communities.

I am grateful for my partnership with YWCA in advocating for children who have experienced trauma. Traumatic experiences, like abuse or a parent's substance use disorder, can lead to health and behavior complications later in life. Children and youth who have experienced four or more traumatic events are three times more at risk of heart disease or lung cancer, while those who have experienced six or more traumatic events are 30 times more likely to attempt suicide. The YWCA has promoted my Trauma Informed Care for Children and Families Act, which is a critical step to address childhood trauma in the United States.

I will continue to stand in solidarity with the YWCA in North Dakota and the rest of the country in strong support of their mission to eliminate racism, empower women, stand up for social justice, help families, and strengthen communities.

Congratulations to the YWCA on 160 years of improving the lives of women and girls all over the country.●

TRIBUTE TO GENO MARTINI

• Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the retirement of