

historic level of obstruction. As I noted yesterday, for example, Mr. Desmond's nomination earned near-unanimous approval from the Finance Committee in August of last year but only this week received a vote on the Senate floor. So many important roles are still vacant with well-qualified nominees who are ready and willing to fill them.

Later today, we will vote on Andrew Wheeler to serve as Administrator of the EPA. Mr. Wheeler has spent the last year as Deputy and now as Acting Administrator. He has wasted no time in proving he has what it takes to lead the Agency. In drawing on a wealth of experience that includes service as staff director of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and a tenure at the EPA that first began back in 1991, Mr. Wheeler has proven his ability to advance pragmatic solutions to pressing environmental challenges. I hope each of my colleagues will join me in supporting yet another well-qualified nominee and vote to confirm him.

Later today, we will also have an opportunity to take care of one other long-overdue item—the nomination of John Ryder to the Board of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Even after being reported out of committee twice on a voice vote, this well-qualified, uncontroversial nominee was nearly subjected to a needless cloture vote this week. I am glad that, instead, we will be voting to confirm Ryder and sending him on to work on behalf of the Tennessee Valley communities.

THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Madam President, on another matter, I have been spotlighting all week our Democratic colleagues' hard left turn toward socialism—their fixation on gaining more government control over more of our lives. With the Democratic Politician Protection Act, Washington Democrats want to control more of what Americans can say about them and how they get elected.

With the so-called Green New Deal, Washington Democrats want our government to spend more money than the entire gross domestic product of the entire world on new spending programs to forcibly remodel Americans' homes, take away our cars, dramatically increase energy costs, and disarm our economy while China roars straight ahead. You might think that right there is plenty of leftwing social engineering. You might think it is enough—oh, but they aren't stopping there, the Democrats. They are going after Americans' healthcare and their private health insurance plans.

Earlier this week, House Democrats introduced a bill that would take away every private insurance option that American families rely on and force everyone into a single, government-run system. Employer-sponsored coverage wouldn't just be discouraged, it would be illegal. They call this legislation Medicare for All. It is really more like "Medicare for None." It completely explodes the Medicare system as it cur-

rently exists. The program our seniors have paid into for decades and now rely on, the Democrats want gone—wiped out.

Remember, by the time Americans turn 65, most have paid tens and tens of thousands of dollars into the current system through Medicare taxes. According to one estimate, Americans with average earnings who reached the retirement age back in 2015 will have paid a present value of more than \$70,000 into Medicare over the years.

American seniors have counted on Medicare. They have planned around it, and they have paid into it with every paycheck. Yet now House Democrats have decided it is time to change the rules on them in the middle of the game. They want to tear down Medicare until the only thing left is the name and slap that name on a completely different system that a few House Democrats invented and that the Democratic Socialists of America is proud to endorse. The Democratic Socialists of America is proud to endorse that. Then the Democrats propose to take that new government system and pile every single American into it as a one-size-fits-all—long waits for treatment, higher costs, and an end to Medicare as we know it—no choice, no options, and no alternatives allowed.

More than 170 million Americans currently get health insurance through their employers. Surveys show that a majority is actually pretty happy with its own specific plans. Well, too bad. The Democrats want those families thrown off those plans. Within 2 years, their proposal would make private health insurance, as Americans know it, illegal across the board. It would be unlawful for employers to offer health benefits to their employees and their families. It is right there in the bill. It would be against the law for employers to offer healthcare to their employees.

Here is what it reads: "It shall be unlawful for a private health insurer to sell health insurance coverage . . . [or] an employer to provide benefits . . . that duplicate the benefits provided under this Act by the government."

How about that? We all remember ObamaCare's famous broken promise: If you like your healthcare plan, you can keep it. If you like the doctor you have, you can keep your doctor too. That was the pledge before the Democrats' policy was actually implemented. Not long after, the fact checkers named that promise their "lie of the year."

Well, this time around, my Democratic friends are not even bothering to pretend that families' lives would not be disrupted. A reporter asked one of our Senate colleagues who is running for President, "So for people out there who like their insurance, they don't get to keep it?" Her response? Listen to this. "Let's eliminate all of that." This is one of our colleagues running for President.

All the plans American families like and rely on made illegal—illegal—by

this bill, not just unaffordable, not just inconvenient, illegal, and all to clear space for a new government takeover.

So how much is this massive takeover going to cost? Well, under even conservative estimates, this proposal would cost more than \$32 trillion over the first 10 years—\$32 trillion over the first 10 years, more than the Federal Government spent on everything over the last 8 years combined.

Where is that money going to come from? Well, I think we all know the answer to that: massive tax hikes on the American people, cuts to services, rationing of healthcare, broken promises, and debt. That is where it is going to come from.

Here is what one economist found in the numbers.

The Federal Reserve's data only go back to 1929, but it's unlikely that the government ever collected more than 20 percent of GDP in taxes. To fully fund Medicare-for-all, that figure would have to rise to more than 30 percent of GDP.

Now, look, I am sure we will hear the class warfare rhetoric about soaking the rich and making a small group of Americans pay for all of this, but it will not be true. We all know it will not be true. The bill for this \$32 trillion takeover would land squarely—squarely—on middle-class families. There is no way around it.

Even if the IRS confiscated every dollar of Americans' adjusted gross incomes over \$1 million—took it all—if the IRS took every cent over \$1 million, it wouldn't even pay for half of the proposal—wouldn't even pay for half of it.

Now, look, class warfare may be a favorite tactic across the aisle, but numbers are stubborn things. Math is math. The costs would have to fall on the middle class. Actually, they would fall on everyone, one way or another.

That economist put it this way, he said: "The simple fact is that financing Medicare-for-all would require a dramatic shift in the Federal tax structure and a substantial tax increase for almost all Americans." Almost all Americans.

So let's sum it up. Washington Democrats want the American people to fork over a recordbreaking percentage of our gross domestic product in taxes for the privilege of having their healthcare plans ripped away from them, even if they are happy with what they have, and the middle class is going to pay for it. What a great deal.

All this, and I haven't even begun to explain how this takeover would cut Americans' access to care and degrade the quality of care. We have all heard horror stories from abroad about bureaucrats making decisions instead of citizens and long waits for treatment.

Last year in Canada, the median wait time for medically necessary treatment from a specialist was 21 weeks—21 weeks. That is the average wait time for medically necessary treatment in Canada—more than double what it was up there just 25 years ago.

In the UK, it is not just long waits patients have to contend with, it is flatout denials of care. In the first quarter of last year alone, Britain's National Health Service abruptly canceled 25,000 surgeries—canceled them.

Imagine that—being fully reliant on the government for healthcare, planning on a medically necessary procedure, and being told at the last minute the whole thing was called off. Welcome to socialized medicine. Needless to say, if some Democrats had their way, you wouldn't have to imagine much longer.

Before I conclude, I want to highlight one more thing. I suppose no far-left wish list like this would have been complete without radical policies on the issue of abortion, without trying to hurt pro-life Americans.

Sure enough, this legislation would shatter the longstanding consensus—consensus—that Federal dollars should not pay for abortions and force taxpayers to fund abortions nationwide. That has been the longstanding consensus. Talk about a perfect case study in the perils of a Federal takeover. Talk about a perfect example of why Washington Democrats should not get the power to twist American healthcare to suit their own radical views—\$32 trillion, every family kicked off its insurance plans, no choice, no options for the middle class, just a huge bill.

The Democrats are so confident the American people will love their new government plan that they feel the need to make other kinds of insurance illegal, and Democratic Presidential candidates are rushing headlong to embrace all of this—watching them embrace all of this. Goodness. If this is one of their best and brightest new ideas, I would sure hate to see the bad ones.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

VIETNAM SUMMIT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, several hours ago, in the middle of the night here in the United States, we received word that the summit in Hanoi between the United States and North Korea would be ending prematurely. Unable to reach an understanding on either sanctions relief or denuclearization, President Trump decided to walk away from the talks without an agreement.

Though I don't know the details yet, and I look forward to speaking with Secretary Pompeo, I was pleased to see the President recognized North Korea's unwillingness to strike a comprehen-

sive deal. President Trump did the right thing by walking away and not cutting a poor deal for the sake of a photo op.

Just like the President, I want a deal with North Korea that will bring an end to the conflict and change the course of the region. However, I have always been concerned about the possibility of a bad deal, especially with the other pressures currently on the President. A deal that fell short of complete, verifiable denuclearization would have only made North Korea stronger and the world less safe, and it would have squandered the substantial leverage our negotiators have now thanks to the bite of sanctions.

President Trump must now apply the lesson of North Korea diplomacy to our trade negotiations with China. President Trump must have the courage to do the same thing with China as he has done for North Korea. The President must be willing to hold the line and walk away if China does not agree to meaningful, enduring, structural reform of its unfair trading policy. President Trump should not fall into the trap of seeking a deal for the sake of a deal, especially now that talks with Pyongyang are on hold.

What he did in North Korea was right. He must do the same thing in China—hold out because he has the upper hand—until we get China to do the right thing. Just because an accord is, for the moment, out of reach in North Korea does not mean that the President should be any more eager to strike one with China if the terms are inadequate or unacceptable.

The President deserves credit for bringing China to the negotiating table with tariffs, but he must not squander that opportunity by cutting a deal that fails to achieve American priorities. Unless China promises to end its predatory cyber theft of American intellectual property and know-how, unless China promises to stop artificially propping up its businesses, unless China promises to end its practice of forcing American companies to give away their IP to their future Chinese competitors in order to do business in China, President Trump should walk away from the negotiations once again.

As important as North Korea is to national security, China is just as critical—maybe even more critical—to American economic security. President Trump and his team have a generational imperative to get this one right. They have a generational imperative not to squander the chance to achieve permanent reforms to China's economic relations with the world, changes that would finally put American investors, businesses, and workers on a level playing field.

BIPARTISAN BACKGROUND CHECKS BILL

Madam President, on guns, I was so glad to see the House passage of a background checks bill. I urge Leader MCCONNELL to take it up in the Senate.

Background checks are supported overwhelmingly by close to 90 percent

of the American people—a majority of Republicans, a majority of gun owners. It doesn't take anyone's guns away. It simply says that if you are a felon, spousal abuser, or adjudicated mentally ill, you shouldn't have a gun, and it takes the means to make sure that happens.

Now there are so many loopholes in the background check law—the Brady law, which I was proud to lead the charge on back in the House in 1994. Now, some 25 years later, they have found ways around it through the internet and through gun shows. Just as it was the right thing to do to close the loopholes that existed in 1994 with the Brady law, it is the right thing to do to close those loopholes that have come about since the law passed. It simply updates the Brady law, which has saved tens of thousands of lives.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Madam President, finally, on climate, in a short time, I will be returning to the floor to lead a group of Democratic Senators in talking about climate change. One of the great but positive ironies of Leader MCCONNELL's stunt to put the Green New Deal on the floor is that it has inspired Members of both parties to talk about climate change—more than ever before, maybe—under the Republican leadership in the Senate.

Democrats are more than happy about that. We want to turn the spotlight back to the issue of climate change and keep it there, where it belongs. Climate change is an existential threat to our planet, not just in the future but right now. We should be talking about climate change nearly every day, and more than that, the Senate should be taking bold action to address it.

So I am glad at least Leader MCCONNELL is talking about climate. He just says what he is not for.

So I will repeat the three questions I have asked Leader MCCONNELL repeatedly: One, Leader MCCONNELL, do you believe that climate change is real? Two, do you believe, Leader MCCONNELL, that it is caused by humans? Three, do you believe Congress should take immediate action to address the crisis of climate change?

Until Leader MCCONNELL puts something positive on the floor and starts talking positively, no one is going to pay much attention to his stunts and his gambits, but, certainly, we Democrats are energized to talk positively about the things we want to do to deal with this issue, and we will be positive and discuss positive proposals until we get something done in this Chamber.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip is recognized.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, just in getting started this morning, I wanted to take a minute to mention the good news on economic growth we received this morning.

While headlines mentioned the very solid 2.9 percent growth number for