

to hike premiums 15 percent without justification.

In June and August, they expanded access to Association Health Plans and what are called short-term plans, which we also call junk health plans because they are a lot cheaper, but they don't cover much, and people don't realize that until they get sick. These plans don't have to cover prescription drugs or mental health or maternity care.

By the way, as the person who led that fight in the Senate Finance Committee, I can tell you that the vast majority of insurance plans prior to the Affordable Care Act did not cover maternity care and prenatal care, which is pretty basic as part of healthcare for women. Remember when being a woman was considered a preexisting condition? That is what we meant. These plans are bringing that back, which means if you are a woman, you have to pay more to be able to get basic healthcare, and that is wrong. We did away with that 10 years ago.

In July, the Trump administration slashed funding for programs that help people enroll in health insurance coverage and began steering people toward the junk plans. So instead of giving people information through healthcare.gov and encouraging people to find out what would be the cheapest plan that would be effective and cover what they need, they made it harder to sign up for comprehensive coverage and pushed people toward these junk plans.

In October, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced that healthcare.gov would be shut down for 60 hours during open enrollment season for "maintenance," so you couldn't even get online to be able to sign up for more affordable, comprehensive insurance that actually would cover things you and your family need.

In November, the Trump administration released information for States on how they could use waivers to undermine consumer protections. Consumer protections are things like not getting dropped if you get sick. Prior to the Affordable Care Act, so many times people said to me: I have paid for insurance all my life and never needed it. I finally need it, and I got dropped after I got sick. What do you mean it only covers 1 day in the hospital or doesn't cover maternity care? What do you mean the insurance company can cap the number of cancer treatments I need? Isn't that up to my doctor?

Well, it is now, and it has been under the Affordable Care Act. Instead, we are in a situation where they are trying to get States to waive consumer protections and put decisions back in the hands of insurance companies.

Thanks to all of this sabotage, it is estimated that comprehensive health insurance costs 16.6 percent more this year than it otherwise would.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to complete my statement, which will be about 2 minutes.

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

Ms. STABENOW. Thank you very much.

It is estimated that comprehensive health insurance costs 16.6 percent more this year than it otherwise would because of all of this sabotage, upheaval, and chaos in the healthcare markets.

In case those sabotage attempts were too subtle, last week the Department of Justice announced that it agrees—the Trump administration now agrees with the Federal judge in Texas who said that the entire Affordable Care Act must be struck down. There would be no more coverage for preexisting conditions, no more consumer protections, no more capacity to have your child on your insurance until age 26, no more capacity to be able to expand what we are doing for minimum wage workers, et cetera.

In other words, if they can't take away your health insurance through the legislative process, they are trying to do it now through the courts, which also goes to what is happening now in terms of changing the rules so they can more quickly put judges through and pack the courts with folks who will agree with taking away people's healthcare.

What is the Republican alternative to the ACA? Unfortunately, these folks still don't have one. Don't worry. President Trump now says that he is going to have a "really great" healthcare plan after he is reelected in 2020. Just wait.

By the way, to emphasize the fact that Senate Republicans support what President Trump is doing, they passed a budget resolution out of committee last week through a partisan vote—only Republican votes—that includes repeal of the Affordable Care Act with no replacement in place.

In the meantime, the Affordable Care Act could be struck down by the courts, and more than 20 million people who gained health coverage through the Affordable Care Act could be out of luck.

Let me say, in conclusion, that just this week I heard from one of those 20 million people. Lisa from Norton Shores graduated with a marketing degree in the middle of a recession and worked a low-wage job at the local hospital for 8 years. When a part-time, temporary job opened up at a local marketing agency, the Affordable Care Act allowed Lisa to take the job and get the experience she needed for a career in her field. She was able to get healthcare separately from her job. That job led to another marketing job with a local company—this one with benefits.

A few years later, the original marketing agency offered Lisa a full-time job. Once again, the ACA allowed her to take it. Lisa wrote this:

It was only through the Affordable Care Act that I have been able to pull myself up to be a contributing member of society. It has allowed me to rise to my capabilities.

She added that if the ACA is overturned, "I will have to leave this job

for a position that includes health insurance. It would kill this awesome small business I work for. . . . This will be a top priority for me when I vote in 2020."

Lisa and millions of other people are sending a message. The only question is, Are folks listening?

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

KESSLER NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Kessler nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

CLOTURE MOTION

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Roy Kalman Altman, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

Mitch McConnell, Johnny Isakson, Roger F. Wicker, Chuck Grassley, John Boozman, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Shelley Moore Capito, Pat Roberts, Roy Blunt, Deb Fischer, David Perdue, Todd Young, John Thune, Rick Scott, Mike Rounds, Marco Rubio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call is waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Roy Kalman Altman, of Florida, to be the United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 66, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 60 Ex.]

YEAS—66

Alexander	Burr	Cortez Masto
Barrasso	Capito	Cotton
Blackburn	Cardin	Cramer
Blunt	Cassidy	Crapo
Boozman	Collins	Cruz
Braun	Cornyn	Daines