

where your money is going when you buy your prescription drugs.

I am eager to question these PBMs tomorrow and to hopefully begin to remove the shroud of secrecy surrounding these rebates and prescription drug prices. Finding out what has led to these rising prices is critical to ensuring that Americans are able to receive the drugs they need at prices they can afford.

TICE FAMILY

Madam President, on a final matter, several families were in Washington this last week to advocate for the release of their loved ones by two rogue regimes. One of the men being held captive in Syria is Austin Tice.

There are many ways you can describe Austin. He is a seventh-generation Texan, a decorated Marine Corps veteran, an Eagle Scout, and an award-winning journalist. Yet, to Austin's family, he is so much more than his impressive list of accomplishments. He is their beloved son, brother, and friend whom they have not seen or heard from for 6½ years.

In the summer of 2012, Austin was getting ready to enter his final year of law school at Georgetown University. Instead of spending the summer working at a law firm, he chose to do something few were brave enough to do at the time, which was to report on the Syrian civil war from the inside. Austin always had a passion for storytelling, and he was frustrated by the lack of reporting on the impact this vicious violence was having on the Syrian people.

In demonstrating his courage and tenacity gained during his time in the Marine Corps, Austin got on a plane that May to fly to Turkey. Over the summer, his photos and stories illuminated the human cost of this conflict until one day in August of 2012 his stories abruptly stopped. The following month, a shocking video surfaced that showed Austin's having been blindfolded, bound, and surrounded by unidentified, armed men. Austin was just a few days from returning to the United States when he was abducted, and to this day, we have no specific information about his captors or the conditions for his release.

Austin's family—particularly Marc and Debra, his parents—has worked tirelessly over these last 6½ years to locate Austin and to bring him home. I have had the privilege of meeting with them multiple times, and I can only imagine what an impact this has had on them and on their entire family. I have tremendous respect for Marc, Debra, and their family. I wonder if others could stand up under this pressure as well as they have, for these many years, during their steadfast advocacy for their son's safe return. Yet they do have a sort of serene confidence that comes across when you talk to them in that one day, Austin will return home.

Once again, I join the Tice family in calling on Austin's captors to release

him immediately. I also continue to call on the administration to make sure that Austin is kept in mind when there are any discussions with the Syrian Government and future decisions to remove U.S. forces from Syria. I assure Austin's family that our resolve has not weakened; it has only grown stronger. I will do everything possible to press for his release, and I will continue to urge the administration to do the same.

CITGO 6 FAMILIES

Madam President, sadly, Austin is not the only American being held captive by a rogue government regime today. In fact, he isn't even the only Texan.

In November of 2017, days before Thanksgiving, six Citgo executives were summoned to Venezuela for meetings with Citgo's parent company, Venezuela's state-owned PDVSA. During the final meeting, these men were detained by the Venezuelan Government, and for the past 16 months, they have been held captive beneath a military intelligence compound in Caracas. They have been denied contact with the State Department. They have been held without a trial. They have been unable to receive humanitarian aid. As the already horrible situation in Venezuela continues to worsen, their conditions are likely deteriorating even further.

In February, the children of two of these men wrote an op-ed in the Houston Chronicle that detailed the suffering of their fathers and that all six families have faced. They wrote: "In their isolation, our fathers have bonded together over a shared purpose: to stay strong in body, mind and spirit in anticipation of their eventual return to their families."

I assure these families that we will continue to stand alongside them in this fight. I call on the Maduro regime to immediately release these Americans and to allow them to return home. I have continued and will continue to urge the administration to make sure this remains a top priority.

Just as we have worked closely with the Tice family over the last 6 years in advocating for the release of Austin, their son, we will continue to do the same for these six men. The heartbreak felt by these families is unfathomable. Their spouses, children, and grandchildren are desperate to have their loved ones returned home. Together, we should do everything in our power to make that a reality.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

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 MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING FRITZ HOLLINGS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, today I wish to start off by just sharing a few words about our former colleague, Senator Fritz Hollings—Ernest F. Hollings, to be precise—of South Carolina. He passed away this weekend at his home in Isle of Palms.

With Fritz Hollings, the people of South Carolina, the Senate, have lost a giant. Hollings was the longest serving junior Senator in American history—behind, of course, Strom Thurmond—representing his constituents for 38 years in the Senate.

Before that, he was a Governor, State legislator, and World War II veteran. Public service was his life's calling. He championed education reform, increasing teachers' pay, a national voice in the fights against hunger and poverty.

He was brought up in the old Jim Crow days, with a great deal of segregation, but as he went through South Carolina, he realized how terrible that was and began to move in the opposite direction.

He was an original. You could always go over to Fritz Hollings. Even when I was a younger legislator, he would pay attention, and he would have something very interesting to say.

Everyone talks about the days of blow-dried, look-alike Senators. Fritz Hollings certainly wasn't one of them. He was an original, and we were all much better for it.

So Fritz, we will miss you, and our thoughts go with your family, as do our prayers and well wishes.

DISASTER RELIEF FOR PUERTO RICO

Now, on another matter, Puerto Rico. Last week, Senator LEAHY and I offered this Chamber a chance to pass a natural disaster funding package that would have addressed everyone's concerns in the Senate.

The "all of the above" solution we presented contained \$16.7 billion in relief for all Americans affected by natural disasters. I would add, I see my two friends from Iowa on the floor today, one in the President's chair, one ready to speak. That would have included far more money for the Midwest than the Republican bill because the Republican bill that was on the floor, while it added 2019 to disaster relief, didn't add in any more money despite the devastation in Iowa and Missouri and Nebraska.

Well, our bill added an additional—an additional—\$2.5 billion in funding for the disasters of 2019, and the vast majority of that would go to Iowa, to Missouri, and to Nebraska, but it also provided much needed aid for the people of Puerto Rico and other territories. They need the help, too, and they are Americans citizens as well.

Let's face the music, folks. Everyone knows what is going on here. Democrats and Republicans had agreed, as we always do, when there is a disaster, we help. The original bill that was put together had aid for Puerto Rico, as

well as aid for the other areas of disaster. The original bill was put together before the Midwest so it didn't have that.

What happened? Is it that somehow our Republican friends from the Midwest and elsewhere thought Puerto Rico didn't deserve the aid? No; President Trump went to a Tuesday lunch, banged his fist on the table—figuratively, I suppose—and said: I don't think any aid should go to Puerto Rico.

Did our Republican friends, especially those from States with disasters and who needed the aid, say: No, no; we are not going to do that; we are not going to let you divide us? No; they went gamefully along with it, hurting their States.

We all know that if there is no real aid for Puerto Rico, the House will not pass the bill. We in the Senate on the Democratic side do not want to hold Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, and the other States, Florida, Texas, Alabama, that are getting the aid hostage for what we want, and our Republican friends shouldn't hold Puerto Rico hostage for what they want.

This grand tradition seems to crumble here day by day, minute by minute, of helping States that need help; that when one American is hurt in one area, Americans in every other area come together and say: We are going to help. That is why we have disaster aid because the enormity of a tornado or a wildfire or a hurricane—the taxpayers of that State can't afford to do it all themselves. So citizens throughout America have had, in effect, a compact that says, when one area is hurt, we all come together.

Look, I suffered a little from that when New York had Sandy. We had some of our Senators from the very States—from the very States—that now are requesting aid say: Don't give aid to New York for Sandy. I have never done that. I have always been for aid to States that are far away from New York and just have Republican representation. We don't do that here—until now. Until now.

So I would say to all of my friends on the other side of the aisle, there is a way out of this—provide the aid that originally Senators SHELBY, a Republican, LEAHY, a Democrat, agreed on. Don't let Donald Trump's nasty temper tantrum somehow about Puerto Rico get in the way. Do the right thing, and he will sign the bill. We know he will sign the bill. He is not going to stop aid for Texas or Florida or Iowa or any other State because this body and the House have put in aid for Puerto Rico.

Let me just mention, just as the people in the Midwest are suffering, people in Puerto Rico are suffering. That island has had a slower recovery from a storm of greater magnitude than any others we are talking about.

So we need to vote on this legislation. It is not an either-or situation. To say you are putting \$600 million in food stamps for Puerto Rico so people

will not starve, when they are not getting the same aid everybody else gets—CDBG, FEMA—that is not right, that is not fair, and that figleaf will not cover up the real motivation of President Trump, which, unfortunately, I don't think most of our Republican colleagues agree with, but they go along with. Everyone is afraid on the other side of anything President Trump does—right or wrong. Unfortunately, he is wrong far too often.

Puerto Rico needs aid so they can rebuild. They need the food aid, but they need more than that. Trump wanted to cut out all of it. Someone on this side said: Well, you have to at least do food aid. He said: Well, I will do that and nothing more. That is not right. Should we do food aid just for every State? Should we do food aid just for Texas or just for Florida or just for Iowa? No rebuilding? Let all of those houses and homes and factories and stores suffer? No. We wouldn't do it for those States. We shouldn't, and we shouldn't do it for Puerto Rico.

So then we decided to compromise even more. There is \$20 billion of aid already for Puerto Rico that hasn't been allocated. The President, in his nastiness to the people of Puerto Rico—citizens, they are American citizens—refused to allocate that money.

Well, Senator LEAHY then said: Let's just take \$8.3 billion of that and free it up. Our colleagues will not even do that.

So when the American people want to know what is holding up this bill, when the people in the flooded areas and the areas that have been hit by wildfires and hurricanes want to know what is holding it up, it is Donald Trump picking one part of the country and saying: "I don't want to give aid to them," and too many—just about every one of our colleagues, at least thus far—going along.

Elections have consequences. The House is now Democratic. It is their strong view that we ought to give aid to Puerto Rico. It is a view I share, but if we don't do the right thing in this body, where we have a tradition of coming together, and you say President Trump will not sign something, when he originally had nothing to do with putting together this bill, we are all going to be stuck for quite a while. We are all going to be stuck for quite a while. Let us in the House, in this body, the Senate, come to a compromise that satisfies the Midwest, that satisfies the hurricane States of Florida, Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama, that satisfies Texas, and get moving. That is what we should be doing.

This idea that we are holding up this bill, when the House wouldn't pass it anyway; the idea that we are holding up this bill, when we know the history that President Trump went into that lunch and changed everything around in the nasty way that he can't even explain—uh-uh; that is not going to fly. That is not going to fly.

RESIGNATION OF KIRSTJEN NIELSEN

Madam President, on Secretary Nielsen, Kirstjen Nielsen submitted her resignation as the Secretary of Homeland Security. When we look back at this moment, I think we are going to remember Secretary Nielsen's tenure as a cruel chapter, in which the Agency followed through on President Trump's worst impulses. Those include advocacy for Trump's ineffective and expensive wall; her support for the longest government shutdown in history that didn't produce anything for President Trump; most regrettably, her full embrace of the child separation policy, leading to thousands of children being ripped away from their families.

Some say Secretary Nielsen argued inwardly against some of these. Well, she should have left a long time ago. She shouldn't be advocating for policies that are so, so wrong. Maybe it is better, maybe it is worse if she knew they were wrong, but it is not good, no matter what.

Through it all, in fact, she continuously misled the American public, even insisting once that "we do not have a policy of separating families at the border. Period."

Well, that was just absolutely false, and Americans from every part of the country were just appalled by that. In fact, some people say one of the reasons the House went Democratic is a lot of suburban Republican women didn't like that policy, as they shouldn't have. So it wasn't even politically as smart as maybe President Trump thought it was.

Despite Secretary Nielsen's advocacy for the wall, for her support of the shutdown, her embrace of the child separation policy, which she always misled Americans about, she still wasn't radical enough for President Trump.

As NBC News reported this morning, President Trump has urged for months that his administration reauthorize the awful practice of separating little, tiny children and babies from their parents.

This is further proof that the President is kowtowing to the worst instincts of people and to the conservative, hard-right, and extreme voices in the Republican Party, with no or little regard for our national security or the ability to function efficiently.

What he has done by these constant firings, the constant change of policy, has simply created chaos at the border. Nobody knows what the policy will be from day to day and week to week and month to month. He doesn't tell the top people in his departments that he has changed his plans.

He fired, evidently, Mr. Vitiello, without even Secretary Nielsen knowing about it.

This erratic, nasty style of governing is not solving any problems at the border, and the more problems and chaos there is, the more people are going to see it is President Trump, as President, can't solve this problem, despite his rhetoric, where he appears tough but doesn't solve the problem.