

these individuals are denied access to care.

There are plenty of ways we can work to improve the Affordable Care Act and lower healthcare costs, but destroying the law and leaving our loved ones at risk is simply unacceptable.

As a member of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions here in the Senate, I am working on solutions each day to bring resources, accountability, and relief to our healthcare system, including supporting legislation to bring down our skyrocketing drug costs and programs that bolster telemedicine in our rural and underserved communities because healthcare is a personal issue that affects each and every one of us, and we all know that just one diagnosis can change your life in an instant.

The Senate today faces many challenges, none more so than the polarization and division that prevents us from coming together in pursuit of the public interest. In his farewell address, Nevada Senator Richard Bryan stated: "If we can restore civility in our public discourse, as we debate the great issues and policy differences of our time, if we can apply the rules that govern the process by which we conduct the Senate's business fairly to all, and if we can work together for the common good, I am confident that the future of the Senate can be as bright as the past."

So this is my pledge to all of you: I will be an independent voice for all Nevadans by agreeing where I can and fighting where I must. There is nothing more important to me than taking care of my home, our home, your families, and all of our families because home means Nevada to me.

During my first few weeks as a Senator, I joined Senator MANCHIN in helping lead the effort to defend the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act. Our resolution will direct the Senate legal counsel to intervene in the Federal court case, where our healthcare system is under attack, to defend our current law, including protections for preexisting conditions.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. RES. 18

Madam President, that is why, as my first action while holding the floor of the Senate, I would like to ask you this:

As in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Rules Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 18 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the resolution to be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. THUNE. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Ms. ROSEN. This is why Nevadans sent me here—to protect their healthcare. And that is what I am

going to do; that is what I will continue to do.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The Senator from South Dakota.

MEDICARE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, if you are in a shaky financial situation, wondering how you are going to meet your obligations, your first instinct isn't generally to wildly increase your spending, unless, of course, you are a congressional Democrat.

Our Nation's Medicare system is on shaky financial ground. Democrats' answer is to massively expand the program to the tune of trillions of dollars.

Two weeks ago, the Social Security and Medicare trustees released their annual report. According to the report, beginning in 2026, Medicare will not be able to meet its obligations. This doesn't even seem to register on Democrats' radar. They steamroll right past the program's already shaky financial status and ask the American people to believe that, somehow, massively expanding the program to include almost the entire U.S. population at a pricetag of staggering proportions will work.

It is difficult to overstate just how unrealistic Democrats' Medicare for All fantasy is. Start with the pricetag: \$32 trillion over 10 years. To put that number in perspective, that is more money than the Federal Government has spent in the last 8 years combined—on everything. That \$32 trillion estimate is likely too low, as it was based on an earlier version of the Medicare for All plan of the Senator from Vermont. His new plan also includes a massive new benefit—funding for long-term care, an enormously expensive part of the healthcare system.

Democrats' last attempt to have the government run a long-term care program fell apart before it was even implemented because the program was not financially viable.

Let's leave aside for a minute the tremendous cost and the tax hikes on ordinary Americans that would be required to pay for it. Let's talk about the massive difficulty of implementing such a system. The junior Senator from Vermont expects people to believe that the government can successfully transition more than 180 million people off of their private insurance and into government-run healthcare in 4 years. To put that in perspective, the Obama administration had 3½ years to implement the ObamaCare exchanges, which were intended to cover a tiny fraction of the number of people who would be covered under Medicare for All. As I am sure most Americans remember, the government couldn't put together a working website in that 3½ year time period. Yet Democrats somehow expect us to believe that they can smoothly transition 180 million Americans into government-run insurance in just 4 years.

We are also somehow supposed to believe things will be much more effi-

cient with government running your healthcare. It is certainly true there is a lot of bureaucracy in our current healthcare system, but I am fairly sure the answer is not giving control of healthcare to the mother ship of bureaucracy—the Federal Government. Democrats also apparently expect Americans to believe that the Federal Government will be able to deliver almost unlimited healthcare for free. Unfortunately, no matter how much money the Federal Government takes in with higher taxes, there will eventually be a limit to how much it can spend on healthcare.

What happens when it can't afford to meet demand, which, by the way, tends to increase substantially when something is offered for free? I will tell you what happens: long wait times and rationing of care, which have become the hallmarks of socialized medicine in other countries.

There is no question that our healthcare system is not perfect. Republicans are currently working on legislation to address some of the healthcare challenges facing Americans, but destroying our current health system to fix the problems we have would be like razing a house to the ground to fix a leak in the bathroom sink.

There are lots of good things about our healthcare system. A lot of people in this country are happy with their healthcare. We need to preserve the good things about our system and fix what is not working and not force everyone into a fantastically expensive one-size-fits-all, government-run healthcare system that would reduce everyone's quality of care.

The Democratic chairman of the House Rules Committee, discussing a House hearing on Medicare for All, recently said: "It's a serious proposal that deserves serious consideration on Capitol Hill."

I would argue that it is the exact opposite. The only things that are serious about this proposal are the serious consequences it would have for the American people if it were ever implemented. It is deeply irresponsible of my Democrat colleagues to peddle this government-run nightmare as a legitimate healthcare solution. One of our former colleagues, Tom Coburn, used to say: If you think healthcare is expensive now, wait until it is free.

Let's hope Democrats decide to take a more serious approach to healthcare reform before Americans are forced to live under the ugly reality of their socialist fantasy.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

HONORING ROBERT MCKEITHEN

Mrs. HYDE-SMITH. Mr. President, I respect the time-honored practice of this body which encourages new Members to listen and observe before speaking on the floor. There is value in humility—knowing when to talk and when to listen.

First, let me say it is a great privilege to represent the people of Mississippi in the United States Senate. I am working hard to support the needs of all Mississippians and to justify the confidence placed in me by the people of my great State.

Today I rise to speak on several important topics. First and foremost, I rise to honor Officer Robert McKeithen, a 24-year-decorated veteran of the Biloxi Police Department who lost his life in the line of duty this past Sunday night, May 5.

Officer McKeithen was described by his chief as “an unbelievably fine policeman.” He was an Air Force veteran, a husband, and a father who dedicated his life to serving the people of Biloxi, my State, and our Nation. His loss is a tragedy and a stark reminder that law enforcement officers risk their lives daily to keep us safe. Officer McKeithen’s family, colleagues, and friends certainly have my deepest sympathy.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. President, I also rise to speak on behalf of thousands of Mississippians who have been affected by catastrophic flooding and other natural disasters this year. Their plight and the unmet commitment made to them long ago provide us an opportunity to evaluate how we as public servants meet the expectations of the people.

On February 25, 2019, the Governor of Mississippi declared a state of emergency due to strong storms, torrential rainfall, and severe flooding. Homes, property, businesses, and public infrastructure had been damaged statewide. On April 23, President Trump granted a major disaster declaration for the State of Mississippi to help communities recover from these events. I am grateful for the President’s actions.

A large portion of West Central Mississippi is experiencing the worst flood records since 1973. On April 1, more than 512,000 acres were flooded. Now, a little more than a month later, more than 488,000 acres in this highly productive agricultural region are still underwater, with conditions forecasted to get worse before they improve. To put that into perspective, these floodwaters span nearly 762 square miles as we speak. This flooding is affecting homes, roads, bridges, churches, schools, and the overall health and public safety of area residents. Septic tanks are overflowing. Snakes are in houses. The bloated bodies of drowned deer, bear, hogs, and other wildlife float in stagnant water. The residents of Mississippi’s Eagle Lake are basically on an island. If someone needs emergency healthcare, it is virtually impossible for an ambulance to get to them.

Further, hundreds of thousands of acres of prime agriculture and timberland will suffer significant damage or simply go unplanted this season. The economic impact on agriculture alone will be in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

I observed the magnitude of the flooding and damages firsthand in a flyover with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers a month ago. The situation on the ground is no different today. It is truly heartbreaking to see. While the full extent of damage can’t be assessed until the floodwaters recede and residents can return to their homes, Mississippians, along with those in the Midwest experiencing similar challenges, need relief also.

I commend the Appropriations Committee chairman and vice chairman for their continued efforts to reach an agreement on an emergency funding measure to help individuals and communities recover from natural disasters. I am especially grateful for their willingness to consider expanding the scope of the legislation to address the 2019 natural disasters. Federal assistance alone will not solve all the problems, and a long road to recovery lies ahead. However, disaster supplemental legislation will provide a very important first step.

The outcome of the push and pull over disaster assistance highlights the need for us, as elected representatives, to consistently evaluate the Federal Government’s performance on delivering promises to the American people. I cannot speak for others, but Mississippians would like to see more action and less acting from their leaders in Washington. Our Nation’s environmental review and permitting process for infrastructure projects is the epitome of a flawed and broken bureaucracy in desperate need of repair.

President Trump’s Executive orders to expedited environmental reviews and approvals for high-priority infrastructure projects speak to the American public’s frustration toward Washington and the never-ending bureaucratic redtape carried over from the Obama administration. I am grateful this administration has taken a strong stance to bring common sense to government operations. It should not take years and numerous acts of Congress to expand and deepen ports or tackle important infrastructure projects that would generate jobs and add billions to our Nation’s economy. It should not take decades and numerous acts of Congress to complete critical flood control projects that will protect the lives and property of Americans while preventing the need for multibillion-dollar disaster measures. Congress should make it abundantly clear that one Federal Agency should not be able to prevent or delay another Federal Agency from delivering critical flood protections specifically authorized by the legislative branch. There are numerous examples of this—what most Americans consider bad government—

across the country. The catastrophic flooding taking place in Mississippi is a prime example of one Agency that has worked at odds with another to the detriment of the public. So many Mississippians are exasperated by the fact that they are losing their homes and way of making a living, all the while knowing it could have been prevented.

The Federal Government has yet to put in place the flood control improvement it has promised area residents since 1941. The fact is, they have made it worse. Make no mistake, today’s flooding in Mississippi should not be happening. It is time for the Federal Government to step up and make good on its promises. It is time for the Federal Government to listen to the people in need of help and to help them.

Over the past seven decades, significant taxpayer dollars have been invested in the Lower Mississippi River Valley to construct a comprehensive, systematic flood control solution which today consists of levees, drainage channels, and floodgates. The last remaining feature of this 77-year effort remains unconstructed due to the excessive, overburdensome regulations and redtape. Because of this, Mississippians are once again losing their homes and businesses, roads and bridges are being destroyed, and wildlife is dying—their habitat lost to contaminated floodwaters.

I bring this to the attention of my colleagues because passage of disaster legislation is vital to my constituents and millions of people across the country. I also call attention to this situation to encourage us to strive to do a much better job in delivering for the American people. That is what our constituents expect, and that is what they deserve.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I rise to speak about National Small Business Week. As ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, I want to thank the 30 million small businesses in America for their contributions to our economy during this National Small Business Week.

I look forward to National Small Business Week every year because it is a chance for us to honor the small businesses and communities in Maryland and across the country that may not make headlines, but they steadily move our economy forward by improving industries, developing new products, and creating employment opportunities for more than 47 percent of all American workers.

One tradition of National Small Business Week is that the Small Business Administration selects a Small Business Person of the Year from each State, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam.

This year’s Maryland Small Business Person of the Year is Zhensen Huang,