

Republican leader that Senate Democrats are ready to pass the bipartisan disaster relief package that has already been agreed to and written.

We should leave out extraneous issues. There are many. Everyone wants to put in their own thing. Leave them for another day.

Democrats are willing to work hard to expedite consideration of that agreement. We are ready to work with our Republican colleagues to pass it as quickly as possible.

I understand that there is some discussion going on in the House, but if we can't come to an agreement this morning on the extraneous issues that the House is discussing, we should set those issues to the side. We should pass the disaster agreement as is and return to those unrelated issues at a later date. The people of the Midwest, of the South, of the West, and of the Territories have waited long enough. They have waited long enough.

There are millions of Americans still recovering from having their homes destroyed, their crops devastated, their property burnt. They have waited for relief for too long already. They are clamoring for it. They have said to Congress: Put aside your differences and get something done. The plan that I outlined will do just that—put aside the differences and get something done.

Whether it is the President or Members of the House or Senate—Democrat or Republican—who want to add extraneous issues, step aside at least for this time. Let's get it done. Let's not delay any longer.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on infrastructure, yesterday, as everyone knows, Speaker PELOSI and I met with the President and a group of other Senators and Congress Members to discuss the prospects for a bipartisan infrastructure bill.

We went to the meeting with high hopes. The President, 3 weeks earlier, had said he would be willing to do a \$2 trillion infrastructure bill and tell us how we would pay for it. Unfortunately, it was a very short meeting. The President walked out after a few minutes with the paltry excuse that he would not work to get things done for Americans unless Congress abdicated its constitutional duty to provide oversight of the executive branch.

His motives were transparent. He knows darn well that these investigations should and will go forward. He had nothing to say on infrastructure. It was typical of the President. He boasts that he wants to do something and then has no followthrough. This administration has become an erratic, helter-skelter, get-nothing-done administration. Even on infrastructure, where there is usually bipartisan agreement, he couldn't even come to the table and talk. He had to throw a temper tantrum and walk out.

Presidents throughout our history have worked with the other party

while being investigated. They know—every President knows—it is a fact that Congress will do oversight. Some of it will not be pleasant for any President. President Obama didn't like oversight; President Bush didn't like oversight; President Clinton didn't like oversight; President H.W. Bush didn't like oversight; President Reagan didn't like oversight. But none of them, Democrat or Republican, said: I am going to stop the government from functioning. I am going to refuse to help hundreds of millions of Americans who need help in one way or another because I don't like Congress fulfilling its constitutional responsibility.

The bottom line is simple. The President was merely looking for any excuse, however inelegant, however transparent, to wriggle out of working with Democrats on a much needed infrastructure bill.

Nothing about yesterday's meeting at the White House changes the fact that we have serious infrastructure demands in our country. Nothing about yesterday's meeting changes the fact that a substantial investment in infrastructure can boost our economy, put millions of Americans to work, create green jobs and green energy sources, and meet the ever-growing demands of the new 21st century.

We came to the meeting with the President with serious intentions to work with him on a large bipartisan bill. He had asked the night before in his letter where we wanted to put the money. I brought to him a 35-page proposal with ideas on how to craft one. We talked about what needs to be done: repairing and rebuilding our old roads and bridges, water and sewer, building a power grid so that we can bring clean energy from the parts of the country blessed with wind and sun to other parts of the country in need of energy, dealing with infrastructure in a way that creates broadband for all of the rural and inner city homes that don't have it, creating green jobs, encouraging electric and other kinds of vehicles that will reduce the output of carbon into the air, and creating much more energy-efficient homes and schools.

There are many demands. It was a comprehensive proposal. The President might not agree with all of it, but we were there, prepared to roll up our sleeves, work, and come up with a plan.

Unfortunately, the President had no plan. Despite his promise 3 weeks earlier that he would have a plan, he had none. Two nights before, he had said: Well, let's not discuss infrastructure until we discuss USMCA and NAFTA. Then, that morning, he didn't even take a seat. He stood up, obviously agitated, and said that the investigations were wrong and stalked out.

We left the meeting disappointed in both the President's decision and demeanor. But America can be assured that Democrats will try to find ways to move the ball forward on this important issue of roads, bridges, broadband,

and power—with or without the President.

Democrats believe in infrastructure, plain and simple. We believe that our infrastructure is an urgent priority of the country and this Congress. We believe we need to rebuild existing infrastructure—the roads, bridges, ports, and sewers. We need to build the infrastructure of tomorrow, such as wind, solar, a new power grid, and broadband for rural and inner city America.

We believe our next investment in infrastructure must be substantial. We believe we can pay for it without asking the middle class to shoulder the burden.

We believe a new 21st century infrastructure program is one of the very best ways to create millions of long-term, good-paying jobs, to boost our economy, and to help combat climate change.

So I say to my Republican colleagues in the Senate: Despite the President's unwillingness to work on anything that benefits the American people, according to him, let's move forward on an infrastructure bill. Let's put together a large, strong, well-funded, and clean infrastructure bill.

Members of both sides should want the opportunity to work on something that will benefit every constituency in every State in America. Members should want to tell the American people that they are working to bring jobs to their States, broadband to rural and underserved urban communities, to work together to improve the economy and the environment with a clean, green infrastructure bill. There is no reason why the Senate should not pursue a bipartisan infrastructure bill.

Congress has taken the lead before. Congress can take the lead again, no matter what the President does. Just because President Trump doesn't want to lead doesn't mean that our work on infrastructure is over—not by a long shot.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

HEALTHCARE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, if you have a leak in your sink or a dripping pipe in the bathroom, you generally fix it yourself or call a plumber to fix the problem. You don't look at your otherwise functioning house and decide to raze it to the ground because of the plumbing issue. But that is basically what Democrats want to do with our healthcare system.

Our healthcare system certainly isn't perfect, but our system also has plenty of positive things going for it: high-

quality care, choice, access to innovative technology and treatments, and most Americans are pretty satisfied with their health insurance. So a logical thing to do would be to fix the problems with our system and to preserve what is working, but that is not what Democrats want to do.

Democrats want to destroy our current system and replace it with a single, one-size-fits-all, government-run program known as Medicare for All.

What will that mean for Americans? Paying more and waiting longer for worse care.

Medicare for All is estimated to cost \$32 trillion or more over 10 years. That is more money than the Federal Government has spent in the last 8 years, combined, on everything. One Medicare expert estimates that doubling the amount of individual and corporate income tax collected would not be enough to cover the cost of Medicare for All. I don't know about the Democrats, but I don't know too many families who can afford to have their tax bills double.

Yet it is not just higher taxes. Medicare for All would eliminate Americans' healthcare choices.

Don't like the one-size-fits-all government healthcare plan? Too bad. You will not have any other option. Private and employer-sponsored healthcare will be a thing of the past. Your only choice will be the government's plan.

Your treatment choices will also be limited. If the government will not want to pay for a particular cancer treatment, for example, you will be out of luck. There will be no switching of an insurer to a better carrier. Unless you have tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars lying around to cover that treatment option entirely out-of-pocket, you are going to go without.

Then, of course, there are the long wait times that are a hallmark of socialized medicine. Patients in Canada and the United Kingdom, both of which have government-run healthcare systems, face tremendous wait times for care. It can take up to a year to get a medical procedure in Canada—one of the reasons you hear so many stories about Canadians coming to the United States for care. Imagine having to wait a year for your child to get a needed surgery. That is the kind of thing that parents can look forward to under Medicare for All.

As I said earlier, there are, undoubtedly, parts of our healthcare system that can be improved, and the Republicans are, in fact, currently working on legislation to increase access to affordable medication and to address the issue of surprise billing, but the solution is not to destroy our current system and force people to pay more for less choice and worse care.

The Democrats' ideology has outrun their common sense. The Republicans are committed to improving America's healthcare system and preserving Americans' healthcare choices. I hope the Democrats will abandon their plan

for government-controlled healthcare and switch their focus to helping us.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ABORTION

Mr. Kaine. Madam President, I rise to speak about the recent uptick in State efforts to criminalize abortion. These proposals, which have been passed in eight States just this year and that have been proposed in many others, impose harsh criminal penalties on women who have abortions or on doctors who terminate pregnancies.

The laws deny women the freedom to make their own healthcare choices. Therefore, they clearly violate the constitutional protections established in *Roe v. Wade* and subsequent cases. In fact, many of the proponents of these laws openly advertise them as being part of a strategy to get the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and to return to the days when States used the criminal law to punish women and doctors for contraception and abortion.

Abortion is a contentious issue. People feel so strongly about it. I understand that. I feel strongly about it, too. It can sometimes appear that there is little common ground between people who call themselves pro-choice and people who call themselves pro-life, but there is common ground among so many of us. For example, Americans with many different views on abortion overwhelmingly believe that *Roe v. Wade* should remain the law of the land. More than 70 percent of Americans support the decision and believe it shouldn't be overturned.

People understand that, whatever they think about abortion for themselves and their own families, they do not believe the State should make the decision for every woman. Women should be able to make their own decisions about pregnancy, contraception, and abortion without State interference, and appropriate regulation of abortion, just as of other medical procedures, especially late in a pregnancy when a fetus could survive independently, is allowable as long as the life and health of the mother receive careful protection.

In addition to the support for *Roe v. Wade*, there is also common ground based on data about strategies that work, and I want to offer a common-ground perspective on this issue. There is a way to dramatically reduce abortion in this country that both pro-life and pro-choice should embrace. It is a strategy of compassion. Let me start with a noteworthy fact that is almost never mentioned.

During the last 25 years, which is the time I have been in elected office, the abortion rate in this country has been cut in half. This is remarkable. You never hear this discussed. By 2015, during the Obama administration, the abortion rate in the United States was at its lowest level since *Roe v. Wade* became law. In fact, if you were to just measure it by the data, you could argue that the Obama administration's years were the most pro-life period since *Roe v. Wade*.

Why has this happened?

While there are a number of reasons, the most important one is this: The rate of unplanned pregnancies is decreasing. Teen pregnancies are decreasing. If the number of unplanned pregnancies goes down, the abortion rate goes down. There is a direct connection between unplanned pregnancies and the abortion rate.

So here is the strategy that should unite everyone: Reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies. Could anyone be against that? Reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies.

The good news is that we know how to do it. When women have better access to affordable healthcare, including better access to contraception and better access to comprehensive sex education, the number of unplanned pregnancies goes down, and the number of abortions drops. We know that more women have access to healthcare and contraception today than in the past. The passage of the Affordable Care Act and the 36 States that have expanded Medicaid have provided millions of women with healthcare, so many of whom didn't have it before, including preventive care and contraception access.

Comprehensive sex education for young people also equips them with information that is necessary to avoid unplanned pregnancies. Some young people decide to delay becoming sexually active, and that is great. Some make better choices about contraception to avoid pregnancy, and that is helpful. So education is a key factor as well. Whatever we call ourselves—pro-choice, pro-life, or anything—if we want to keep reducing unplanned pregnancies and, thereby, reducing the abortion rate, guess what. We know just how to do it: Make sure kids get comprehensive sex education so they can make more responsible choices, and keep working to expand healthcare, including access to contraception for women. This is the compassionate way to bring down the abortion rate. It supports women, trusts their decisions, and succeeds in reducing unplanned pregnancies.

Yet here is something that puzzles me. The GOP legislators all across this country have generally opposed, quite bitterly, those proven strategies, and so have many in the pro-life community. The GOP has fought the Affordable Care Act every step of the way, and it now stands squarely behind the effort to repeal the act entirely and