

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. COTTON. Mr. President, many State legislatures across the country have taken action recently to protect unborn babies from the violence of abortion. My home State, for instance, Arkansas, has just passed a law to protect unborn babies after 18 weeks of development. This reform is not just supported by Arkansans; it is supported by a large majority of all Americans, more than 70 percent of whom believe unborn babies ought to be protected at or before that stage of pregnancy.

These reforms are the work of the pro-life movement, which fights for the most vulnerable among us every day. The pro-life movement seeks change in the noblest tradition of our country and works within our democratic system so that our laws ultimately live up to our highest principle in the words of our Declaration of Independence—that all men are created equal and that all have a basic right to life.

Of course, this is a democracy. So not everyone agrees when or even if we ought to protect the unborn. I understand that. I know there are decent people on both sides of this sensitive issue. We resolve our differences and reach compromise through democratic debate. What should never happen, though, is a billion-dollar corporation's trying to dictate these moral questions to us. Politically correct CEOs shouldn't be in the business of threatening normal Americans, but that is exactly what we have seen lately.

The loudest objections to these pro-life laws haven't come from the bottom up, from normal citizens who happen to disagree with one another, but from the top down, from cultural elites and, increasingly, from giant corporations that wield their economic power as a weapon to punish the American people for daring to challenge their pro-abortion extremism.

Giant media companies, like Disney, Netflix, and WarnerMedia, have threatened to cripple Georgia's film industry if its residents don't bend the knee and betray their pro-life convictions.

Just last Monday, the New York Times ran a full-page advertisement that was organized by the pro-abortion lobby and was signed by the CEOs of hundreds of companies that read that legal protections for unborn babies are "bad for business." How disgusting is that? Caring for a little baby is "bad for business."

Now, I get why outfits like Planned Parenthood and NARAL would say babies are bad for business. Abortion is their business, after all, and they are just protecting market share. Yet what about all of those other CEOs? Why do they think babies are "bad for business"? It is, perhaps, because they want their workers to focus single-mindedly on working, not on building families and raising children.

All these politically correct CEOs want company men and women, not family men and women. They will support your individuality and self-expression just as long as you stay unattached and on the clock.

You couldn't find a more perfect example of this mindset than that of &pizza, one of those companies whose CEO signed the pro-abortion ad. This company, &pizza, doesn't even offer paid maternity leave to its employees, but it does celebrate their oneness and individuality. It will even pay employees to get a tattoo of the company logo. So if you want to be a walking billboard for your employer, &pizza will foot the bill, but if you are pregnant with a child, tough luck.

In the spirit of some of these CEOs, I might call for a boycott of &pizza for their political correctness, but you could just skip them because their pizza is lousy anyway.

There is a troubling trend among giant corporations using their wealth and power to force liberal dogma on an unwilling people. As liberal activists have lost control of the judiciary, they have turned to a different hub of power to impose their views on the rest of the country. This time it is private power located in a few megacities on the coasts.

That is not an exaggeration. The overwhelming majority of companies that lashed out against the pro-life movement in that New York Times ad are headquartered on the coasts, hoping to rule the rest of us like colonies in the hinterlands. More than three-quarters are headquartered in New York or California alone. More than a dozen are foreign companies. Yet those same companies presume to tell all of America what we should think.

For some reason, this outrage only seems to go in one direction. As States like Arkansas have passed pro-life laws, other States have sadly gone down a different path, stripping unborn children of recognition and protection under the law. States like New York, Illinois, and Vermont recently passed laws declaring abortion a fundamental right, accessible until moments before birth for practically any reason as long as you have a doctor's note.

We have already begun to see the consequences of these laws which strain so mightily to defy and deny the humanity of the unborn. In New York City, prosecutors recently dropped a charge of abortion against a man who brutally stabbed to death his girlfriend and her unborn child. They dropped that charge because the pro-abortion law that had just passed the legislature in Albany removed all criminal penalties for killing an unborn child. According to the laws of New York State, that woman's child never existed.

The pro-abortion laws passed in New York, Illinois, Vermont, and elsewhere truly deserve the label "radical." So why isn't the national media covering these radical laws with the same intensity they have reserved for States like

Georgia? Where are the indignant CEOs who profess to care so much for their female employees? They are nowhere to be found because their outrage is very selective. They don't speak for the majority of Americans, much less for women. Instead, they are actively trying to force a pro-abortion agenda on an unwilling public.

These companies want to wield a veto power over the democratic debate and decisions of Arkansans and citizens across our country. They want to force the latest social fashions of the coasts on small towns they would never visit in a million years. They want us to betray our deeply held beliefs about life and death in favor of a specious account of equality. If there is one thing the New York Times ad got right, it is that "the future of equality hangs in the balance" when it comes to abortion, but their idea of equality doesn't include everyone. It omits, it degrades unborn babies as expendable, lesser than even bad for business. That is a strange kind of equality, if you ask me.

This trend of intolerance ought to alarm everyone, no matter your views on this sensitive question. It threatens democratic debate on this question and ultimately on all questions.

Despite the pressure campaign waged against us, I am heartened because I know the pro-life movement will carry on, as it always has, speaking to the inherent dignity of every human life. Not everything can be measured on a corporate balance sheet. Some things are bigger and more important than the bottom line or what wealthy, politically correct corporations consider bad for business. The cause of life is one of those issues worth fighting for.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise to talk about something I have talked about many times on the floor and to reiterate over and over again that healthcare isn't political; it is personal. It is personal for people in Michigan. It is personal for every person, every child, and every family all across our country.

It affects each of us, regardless of our political affiliation or the State we live in or what kind of car we drive. Hopefully, you are driving a car made in Michigan.

At some point, just about all of us will need to take at least one prescription medication in our lifetime. The question is, Will we be able to afford it?

Brian Hose knows this struggle very well. He owns Sharpsburg Pharmacy, an independent drugstore in Sharpsburg, MD. He joined me and some of

my Democratic colleagues at a press conference last week on the rising cost of prescription drugs.

As a pharmacist, Dr. Hose works hard every day to make sure the customers he has have access to the medications they need to stay healthy and, in many cases, to stay alive.

However, that task keeps getting harder and harder. Between 2008 and 2016, prices on the most popular brand-name drugs rose 208 percent—208 percent during that timeframe. Dr. Hose's customers didn't see their incomes rise 208 percent during that same time. Certainly people in Michigan didn't see their incomes rise 208 percent during that same timeframe.

According to AARP, the average price of brand-name drugs that seniors often take rose at four times the rate of inflation in just 1 year—four times the rate of inflation in 2017 alone. That is unsustainable for people.

Dr. Hose's most vulnerable customers are seniors, of course, especially those who live on Social Security. As the price of medications keeps going up and up, Dr. Hose's customers find it harder and harder to pay for the medications they need.

Dr. Hose said this: "In no way is the current system looking out for the best interests of the patient, who ultimately needs to buy their medications to stay alive." Just ask anyone who takes insulin. Insulin is not a new drug. In fact, it has been around since 1922—almost 100 years—when Canadian scientists treated the first diabetic patient. Those scientists sold the patent to the University of Toronto for three Canadian dollars. They said they didn't believe they should make money off of something that was so important to people's lives. Imagine. They knew how important their discovery was and how many lives would be saved. But somewhere between 1922 and 2019, insulin has become less about saving lives and more about making money. In fact, over the past 15 years, insulin prices have tripled, putting people's health and lives at risk.

Last summer, I met Nicole Smith-Holt, who lives in Richfield, MN. She came to Washington, DC, to testify during a hearing on prescription drug prices. Her son, Alec, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when he was 24 years old. Alec worked hard to keep his diabetes under control, but one thing he couldn't control was the rising cost of his insulin.

When Alec turned 26, he was no longer qualified to be under his parents' insurance plan, as we have under the Affordable Care Act. About 20 days later, he went to the pharmacy to buy his monthly supply of insulin. The bill for his insulin and supplies came to \$1,300. It was a week from payday, and he didn't have \$1,300, so he started rationing his insulin. Alec never made it to payday.

Nicole said:

I received a call that no parent ever wants to receive or expects to receive. I was told

that my son was found dead in his apartment, on his bedroom floor all alone.

She added:

We lost an amazing young man. He had so many hopes and dreams. He left behind a 5-year-old daughter who now has to grow up without her father. His little brother lost his idol, his sisters lost a best friend, and my husband and myself lost our child.

Affordable medication is a life-and-death issue for millions of Americans like Alec. Unfortunately, we have a pharmaceutical industry that is more interested in profits right now than in people.

In 2018, there were 1,451 registered lobbyists for the pharmaceutical and health product industry. That is almost 15 lobbyists for every Senator. Their job is to stop competition and keep prices high, and they are doing a very good job. It is the ultimate example of a rigged system. It has to change.

The No. 1 way we can bring down costs is to let Medicare negotiate the best price. From the beginning, Medicare Part D has been prohibited from harnessing the bargaining power of 43 million American seniors to bring down costs, which is absurd. That didn't make sense back in 2003, when it was passed as part of Medicare Part D's protectionist language, and it doesn't make sense today.

We know how negotiation can work. We know how negotiation can work because it works for the VA, which saved 40 percent compared to Medicare. We have the VA system for veterans, and we have Medicare for seniors and people with disabilities. The VA negotiates. Medicare is stopped by law from negotiating best price—which, by the way, keeps us with the highest prices in the world. In fact, according to a recent AARP analysis, Medicare could have saved \$14.4 billion on just 50 drugs in 2016 if that program had paid the same prices as the VA—\$14.4 billion. By the way, cut that down, that is hundreds of dollars—thousands of dollars out of the pockets of seniors and people with disabilities and, more broadly, people across the country in every family.

A recent poll found that 92 percent of Americans support allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices. I would love 92 percent agreement on anything. We should be able to act quickly on something that 92 percent of the American public thinks we ought to do. So what is stopping us? The pharmaceutical lobby and my Republican colleagues in Congress. It is time to listen to the 92 percent of Americans who want to allow Medicare to negotiate with drug companies. It is just plain common sense.

Negotiating a bulk price is not radical; it is actually something that is done in industry after industry after industry.

Dr. Hose said:

Seniors in Medicare Part D are one of the largest purchasers of medication in the world. Yet they are unable to leverage their buying power to decrease their costs.

It makes no sense. It makes no sense. It is past time that this should be changed. But we certainly, as we are talking about ways to lower prices right now—and I commend the chairman and ranking member of Finance for working on this issue and the chairman for bringing the top drug company CEOs and the pharmacy benefit managers into committee. I commend him for that. But this is the moment we need to be totally focused and totally serious about bringing down prices in the most effective way. If we want to do it right, we need to allow Medicare to negotiate on behalf of the American people and put people first.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, today we will take the first step in the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act when we hold the cloture vote this afternoon. For the last 58 years, consecutively, Congress has passed this important legislation to fund our Nation's military and support the men and women who wear our uniform and defend our freedoms, both at home and around the world.

Last month the Senate Armed Services Committee voted overwhelmingly by a vote of 25 to 2 to advance this legislation to the Senate floor. So it goes without saying, perhaps, that this enjoys broad bipartisan support, but in this political environment, I will go ahead and say that anyway.

This bill received that kind of support because it includes the ideas and feedback from Members of both parties and places our national security where it should be, above all other considerations when it comes to the Federal Congress.

I wish I could say the same thing about the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act. After extensive debate and a largely party-line vote in the House, the House Armed Services Committee voted last week to ban the deployment of low-yield nuclear warheads on submarine-launched ballistic missiles, which is a dangerous step that could prevent us from being able to respond to attacks from our adversaries.

I realize the seriousness of this topic, and really the purpose of my speaking today is to raise the visibility of this issue so that Members can begin to understand and grapple with the subject matter and reach informed decisions, which I believe would be in favor of the Senate version, which would allow the deployment of low-yield nuclear weapons on submarines.