

parts of landmark laws on an appropriations bill is legislating on appropriations and ought to require 60 votes. It is wrong.

Now, I would say to my friend, why is the other side so determined to repeal two laws—one dealing with the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act, and then the other one is this Clean Air Act—why are my friends on the other side continuing to go against these landmark laws—which, by the way, were signed into law by a Republican President? He has to explain, because I don't understand why people want to put children at risk and families at risk, pollute our rivers and streams, and suspend a plan that the President has announced is going to save thousands of lives, going after carbon pollution, making sure we don't go back to the days of smog and ozone. And we know these are the riders that my Republican friends want to offer. There is no secret.

The Republican leader defined the 60-vote threshold for controversial amendments. I can assure my friend that if there was a tweak or two that was going to be made and Senator MIKULSKI and Senator SHELBY agreed with it, I would not demand 60 votes.

We are talking about repealing basic, important landmark provisions of environmental laws, and that is exactly what this is about.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Will the gentlelady yield for a question?

Mrs. BOXER. I would be happy to yield, yes.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Because I was listening to what she said. Senator REID proposed a 60-vote threshold on amendments to our appropriations bill. It was rejected. OK. The Senator said now she wouldn't object—

Mrs. BOXER. To a 60-vote threshold, no.

Ms. MIKULSKI. On all amendments? Could the Senator clarify?

Mrs. BOXER. Yes. I would say—

Ms. MIKULSKI. In other words, the Senator does want a 60-vote threshold or is it—

Mrs. BOXER. I would go with the Mitch McConnell rule, which he has stated seven times, which is that on controversial amendments we have to have 60 votes. I am not going to stand here—

Ms. MIKULSKI. So the Senator would want—

Mrs. BOXER. I just want to answer my friend.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Sure.

Mrs. BOXER. My friend said we are trying to spare people tough votes. That is ridiculous. Members on your side, Members on our side—we are grownup Senators. We know how to win elections, cast tough votes. I want to protect the American people, and so do a lot of folks on our side of the aisle. And we don't want to see majority rule to repeal landmark environmental laws. We are not going to stand for it, and neither would the minority leader in the way he describes it. He said over

and over that on amendments of controversy we have to have a 60-vote threshold.

So my friend, if he is sincere about this—he is sincere about this. But if the two chairmen can come up with a plan where amendments like this, controversial amendments, require 60 but amendments that both sides feel are not controversial can go to a voice vote, I will be a happy person. I have gotten bills through here before. I wasn't born yesterday, as you can probably tell, and we know a controversial amendment from a noncontroversial amendment.

So I will close with this: I know my friend Senator MIKULSKI is an incredible chairman, and with RICHARD SHELBY working with her, they are quite the duo. And I have seen their work—because every single Member cares about the work they do—and it is stellar. But I am not going to sit here and see amendments come to the floor that would repeal clean air, clean water, safe drinking water, and just nod approval and say: Oh yeah, just take it away. No big deal. That is it.

And that is why I feel the majority leader was right when he said let's move forward with a 60-vote threshold. That makes a lot of sense. I am sorry the Republicans objected.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to continue and finish my remarks.

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

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I have been really interested in this debate. Let's just be honest about it. The Senate is being run in a shoddy fashion. I don't care which side you are on. I have only been here 38 years, and I have never seen a bigger mess than we have right now. I have never seen the majority stifling amendments by the minority like we have right now. I have never seen cloture filed almost immediately when a bill is brought up, like we are filibustering when we are not. All we want are amendments and to have a vote up or down—something we always gave the Democrats on crucial bills like this one. It is pathetic, and it has to change.

Frankly, if the American people really knew—we have had nine amendments since last July that we voted on. The Democrats have had only seven. Now, even some of my Democratic friends are up in arms about it. They are not able to act as Senators. They are not able to do the work. They are not able to be part of it. I mean, my gosh, is protecting your side from the election—is that more important than having the Senate run the way it should? The answer to that is a resounding no.

This is pathetic. I have never seen anything like it. To come out here and act holier-than-thou about it, as if it is just normal around here, is just plain

wrong, and everybody knows it. That is the thing that just kills me.

If we were doing that, if we were in the majority, my gosh, the whole world would be coming down on us, especially with the beloved media we have in this country—and rightly so if we were pulling the kinds of the stunts that are being pulled on the Democratic side.

Look, I am tired of it. I know Democrats who are tired of it. Every Republican is tired of it. We are being treated as though we don't count in this battle—in this battle between the two parties in the Senate. It doesn't have to be a battle every time. Both sides have been wrong from time to time but nothing like this. This is pathetic.

IRS INVESTIGATION

Madam President, about a year ago the American people learned that the IRS—one of the most feared and powerful agencies in our government—had engaged in political targeting. There is no doubt about that. Specifically, we learned that the IRS had, by its own admissions, singled out individual conservative groups applying for tax-exempt status for harassment and extra scrutiny during the runup to the 2010 and 2012 elections, and the IRS admits it—at least some in the IRS admit it. Needless to say, the American people were outraged when this news became public, and the IRS's credibility was seriously damaged.

We saw numerous groups and individuals come forward to acknowledge that they had been targeted. Politicians across the political spectrum, including the President of the United States, condemned these actions and vowed to get to the bottom of it.

In the many months since the targeting scandal was revealed, I have said numerous times that the most important objective for the IRS and its leadership consisted of repairing its reputation with the American people. For a while there, it appeared as though the agency was serious about doing that. Sadly, over the last few days a new chapter in this scandal has been opened, and as a result the IRS's credibility has taken yet another serious hit.

For more than a year the Senate Finance Committee has been engaged in a bipartisan investigation into the targeting scandal. During most of that time we were under the impression that the IRS was acting in relative good faith to cooperate with our inquiry. As of last week we believed we were close to completing our investigation. We had prepared the bipartisan majority report and the majority and minority views in addition. We were about ready to come out with that. The facts, we believed, were coming together. Then, in what I thought would be one of the last steps in the investigation, I insisted that we send a letter to IRS Commissioner John Koskinen demanding that he formally certify that the agency had produced

all documents that were relevant to our requests. It was then—after we sent that notice to them asking them to verify—that we learned there was an enormous hole in our factfinding. I am sure glad we sent the letter.

On Friday of last week the IRS informed us that due to a hard drive crash, it was unable to produce thousands of pages of emails from Lois Lerner—the one who took the fifth amendment—the former Director of Exempt Organizations and one of the central figures, by anybody's estimation, if not the central figure, in this investigation. The gap in the emails was from 2009 through April 2011—a pivotal time in the activities under investigation.

You heard that right, Madam President. A full year after our initial investigation request or information request, the IRS informed us that a huge chunk of relevant emails was mysteriously gone.

Needless to say, this was disturbing. That is why Chairman WYDEN and I demanded to meet with Commissioner Koskinen on Monday of this week. Sadly, this meeting produced even more bad news.

The first thing we learned during the course of this meeting was that Ms. Lerner's emails were not going to be reproduced. The IRS's redundancy operations were apparently insufficient to ensure that these emails would be saved in the event of a hard drive crash. According to Commissioner Koskinen, the IRS only saves emails on its servers for 6 months. Get that. The IRS only saves emails on its computer servers for 6 months. Now, they require you and me and everybody else to save at least 3 years of our tax returns, but they only—according to them—were saving emails on their servers for 6 months. I don't know about you, but I have a rough time believing that. I cannot believe it. That is what they do.

The next thing we learned is that officials at the IRS became aware of this gap in Ms. Lerner's emails as early as February of this year and that the Commissioner was made aware of the hard drive crash about 3 weeks or more prior to our meeting—he wasn't quite sure, but sometime around the end of March or the first part of April, is my recollection, but certainly more than 3 weeks before our meeting. It was never made clear to us why it took at the very least 3 weeks and a letter from us demanding a signed certification from the Commissioner for the IRS to inform the Finance Committee that the emails were missing. As of right now we still don't know why the agency failed to inform us immediately that the emails were gone.

The IRS was more willing to share this information with others in the administration. Yesterday we learned that by April the IRS had already notified Treasury that some of Ms. Lerner's emails appeared to be missing. We also learned that in April Treasury informed the White House of this devel-

opment, but they didn't inform us. The IRS has offered no explanation of why they waited 2 more months to inform Congress—and particularly the Senate Finance Committee, which is the crucial committee here in the Senate which was performing an active investigation into this very issue. You haven't heard from either me or the chairman, Senator WYDEN, popping off about this. We conducted a reasonably good investigation, doing everything we thought we could do without mouthing off about it.

Moreover, we do not know what discussions have taken place since April between the White House, Treasury, and the IRS about the lost emails.

That would be bad enough, but it gets worse.

After our meeting on Monday, we were surprised to learn, via a press release from the House Ways and Means Committee, that even more emails relevant to our investigation may be missing. Apparently the IRS had informed the Ways and Means Committee, but not us, knowing we were conducting an investigation, that it might have lost the emails for six IRS employees, all of whom were covered by the Finance Committee's document requests. Think about that.

One of these employees is reported to be Nikole Flax, who was the chief of staff to former Acting Commissioner Steve Miller. In that role Ms. Flax helped oversee the processing of tax-exempt applications. From our investigation, we also know that she directly dealt with the White House and the Office of Management and Budget on a number of issues.

It seems there is an epidemic of hard-drive crashes going on at the IRS, and it seems to be particularly focused on individuals relevant to the targeting scandal and the ongoing congressional investigations. Chairman WYDEN and I just wanted to get to the truth on these matters, but it is going to be difficult to ever get there now.

Needless to say, it is very troubling that even more emails might be missing and may never be recovered. It is also troubling that neither Commissioner Koskinen nor his staff thought they should reveal this information to Chairman WYDEN and myself during our long conversation earlier this week. They knew about it, but they didn't tell the people who were conducting the investigation about it at all.

It is obvious from the timing of the revelations that people in that room were aware of the additional missing emails. Yet it didn't occur to any of them that they should disclose this information to the chairman and ranking member of the only Senate committee with oversight authority over this agency.

As I said, the Finance Committee was getting close to completing its investigation last week. We were getting close to issuing our report, and we were moving forward under the assumption

that the IRS had been cooperating. It took me a week to read the bipartisan report and the majority and minority views that were added to it—not because I am a slow reader, but because I was interrupted all day long every day. I had to set aside various times when I could read it. We were moving forward under the assumption that the IRS had been honestly cooperating—we thought. Now we have to ask ourselves whether we can trust any of the statements coming out of this agency.

Our investigation is important. We need to have a full and complete account of what went on at the IRS during the 2010 and 2012 election campaigns. Sadly, it seems that in order to get such an account, we are going to need to also delve into what has gone on at the IRS during the months the agency was supposedly trying to respond to our reasonable document requests.

One way or another, I am going to get to the bottom of this, and I am prepared to take any steps that are necessary to do so. We need to get to closure on what the facts are before we can close out the investigation. Otherwise, the conclusions in the investigation will be based on a faulty factual premise.

Earlier today, I sent a letter to Commissioner Koskinen demanding to know what he knew about the additional missing emails and why the chairman and I were not informed about them during our meeting this last Monday. He had three others with him, and at least one of them fully knew about the additional six hard drives that crashed.

I am not naive. I do a lot in the IT world, and I can tell you this: These are the first hard drives that crashed—that I have known about—that some of our IT, information technology, experts could not get into and find some of the data. That is possible but not probable in seven different cases. Once again, it appears that either the Commissioner or his staff were less than forthcoming in the meeting and someone needs to be held responsible.

This is important. If we can't trust these agencies to be truthful to congressional leaders, we have serious problems. This letter is only the first step. More action needs to be taken. There needs to be an independent review of the fiasco surrounding all of these lost emails and crashed servers.

We need an independent arbiter to determine if the agency's account of the computer problems is accurate and whether the relevant emails are, in fact, unrecoverable. We also need a review to determine if there are more missing emails. As I said, this review needs to be independent as we apparently can't trust the IRS to be fully forthcoming on these issues. This is what we are going to need to get to the bottom of it, but sadly, even that won't be enough.

The problem with these missing emails is that we won't have any assurances that we will ever get a complete

picture of what went on. We need to take the necessary steps to find out what communications these individuals were making during the time in question.

We have received many of these employees' emails from the IRS because for obvious reasons they tended to include the email addresses of other IRS employees. However, what we don't have are emails sent by these individuals to parties outside the IRS. If the computer problems at the agency have indeed made these emails impossible to recover on the IRS's end, the only way to recover them is to extend the inquiry to agencies outside the IRS.

Let me say, this is a mess. Honestly, I don't see how any reasonable person cannot conclude that there is a very real possibility that something is wrong in Washington, something is wrong at the IRS, something is wrong at Treasury, and something is wrong at the White House.

Communications to agencies such as the Treasury Department, Justice Department, and the Federal Election Commission are all relevant, as are emails sent to the White House.

I plan to send document requests to all of these parties, asking them to produce any communications they received from the seven IRS employees whose emails have been lost.

Of course, in an ideal world none of this would be necessary, but we are not living in an ideal world. Instead, we are living in a world where apparently hard drives crash every day and administration officials decide to withhold information from congressional investigators. As a result, additional steps are necessary in order for the truth to finally come out.

In conclusion, I want to make one thing clear. While I am angered and disappointed by this recent turn of events, I am not the aggrieved party here. That unfortunate distinction belongs to the American people.

Once again, the IRS is one of the most powerful and feared agencies in our government. It is one that millions of Americans have to deal with on a daily basis. The American people have a right to expect this agency will conduct itself in a fair manner without regard to parties and politics, and that trust was broken last year when the targeting scandal was made public.

Now, a year later, after all the work we have done to hold this agency accountable and to get to the bottom of these matters, that trust has been broken again.

I have to say that Chairman WYDEN has been very good on these matters. He has tried to be bipartisan in every way, and I personally appreciate it. I think he will continue to work in a bipartisan way as we try to get the real facts about all of these matters.

It is a shame, but once again I am going to get to the bottom of this one way or the other. It is going to be difficult because it appears that going forward we will not be able to trust any-

thing the IRS says to Congress. That is why we are going to have to bring other parties into the inquiry. This is unfortunate. As I said, this is the world we are living in.

I am discouraged about this. I mean, the administration knows I am as fair as a person can be on our side, and all I want to do is get to the facts and the truth and resolve these problems in the best interest of the American people.

Why some of these were not brought up when they were known is beyond me. It is beyond me that only after we sent a letter saying: Will you verify this is everything, then all of a sudden there were other emails that were found, but not from these servers, and not for 2 years in the case of the Lois Lerner server.

Lois Lerner took the Fifth Amendment, which is her right. I am not about to condemn her as a guilty criminal around here, but I think the best thing she could have done was help provide these emails that would hopefully exonerate her, but I believe would not. Otherwise I don't think there would have been a crash of the computer.

What really bothers me is this too: When computers in the Federal Government crash, they usually have backups, and the backups will allow us to get the computer up and working. For some reason there apparently were not backups here either. Not only that, they were only keeping track of the prior 6 months, so you would have never gotten the 2 years no matter what you did if the computer crashed. But we don't have those 2 years, which were relevant years, in anybody's estimation.

There is something rotten in Washington. I am not sure who is responsible for it. I have to say I like Mr. Koskinen. I helped put him through in a very ready fashion and got him confirmed. I believed he was telling us the truth. But I am disturbed that the only way we even got the rest of the available emails—none from 2009 to 2011. And who knows, as to the other six servers, how many of those crashed and how many of those emails are gone forever.

The administration will say, well, we did look at the addresses and we got the emails in some respect from some of the people they were sent to, but that is not what the real investigation would show either. They don't have a bit of an excuse here. It just makes one wonder, why did Lois Lerner take the protections of the Fifth Amendment? Why has not the administration been outraged as much as we are? I can say I believe our distinguished chairman is as outraged as I am. I can't speak for him, naturally, but I know him, and he is as upset as I am because we sat right there last Monday and they never told us about the six servers. As far as I know, they disposed of the crashed server of Lois Lerner. So nobody will ever be able to examine it and determine whether there is the possibility of

getting the emails for that crucial period between 2009 and 2011, which is probably the most crucial period of the whole investigation.

Now Senator WYDEN and I have to rework our report on this, and hopefully we can do that, even though we don't have all the information that anybody with common decency would expect us to have.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

IRAQ

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, we all continue to follow the events in Iraq that have significant national security implications for the United States now and in the years to come. The President spoke on this issue a few moments ago, and I wish to share a few thoughts before we return to our States for the next few days and then come back to Washington early next week to continue our work.

The first thing I wish to say about this issue of Iraq is, while I certainly respect those Members who have served in this body and those commentators who have either served in government and now are out and others who have strong opinions about the decisions that were made regarding Iraq in the past, I would say I hope what we spend our time around here doing during this process is focused on what is happening now and what lies ahead. That doesn't mean there shouldn't be a debate about the decisions made in 2003 and beyond. Those are important debates to have, primarily because we learn from history. We learn from the successes and the mistakes, but I think we are spending a lot of time around this process these days talking about the past. We have the rest of history to debate who was right and who was wrong with regard to the war in 2003 or the surge thereafter. I have strong opinions about it, and we should certainly spend time talking about that so we can learn from it and so we can apply it to new decisions that are being made, for example, in Afghanistan, but I would hope that 90 to 95 percent of what we spend our time on is talking about how to deal with this threat now—the one that is right before us.

The President today announced—and it is going to be covered—that they are going to send close to 300 additional American trainers and advisers into Iraq. I have no direct objection to that decision. I am hopeful, however, that it is but the first step in a multistep process in this counterterrorism risk we now face. I am hopeful what this is designed to do is set the framework for the United States to achieve a number of important goals that directly impact the national security of the United States.

The first, of course, is I believe the United States, working in conjunction

with others in the region, needs to do everything we can to cut off ISIL's supply lines. Many people may not be fully aware of this, but ISIL or ISIS—the same group involved in Syria—is not simply a bunch of Sunni Syrians or Sunni Iraqis; these are foreign fighters, including hundreds who are estimated to have come from the West, who have flocked to Syria and now Iraq to participate in this fight.

In addition, this group, in order to make the advances and the gains it is now making in Iraq, requires—as any force would—distinct supply lines that allow them to transport individuals and weapons and ammunition, in addition to, by the way, the things they are now getting their hands on as they make these advances. So one of the goals the United States must have, working in conjunction with others, is to sever those supply lines so they cannot continue to make these gains.

Secondly, I hope what the President announced today as the beginning of a process will, in part, also focus on the command and control areas they currently operate from within Syria. Without those safe havens, they would not possibly be able to expand the reach they now have. So I hope, again, that what the President announced today is but a first step toward a multistep process that allows us to address those two issues.

In addition, I think it is important to continue to revisit the issue of the opposition in Syria. When people read about the opposition in Syria, it is important to note there is no such thing as the opposition. There are a handful of groups operating within Syria against the Assad regime, but these groups also fight each other, and there is a group of nonjihadists, nonradical terrorists who are fighting in Syria to topple Assad, but this group also takes on the al-Nusra Front and ISIS. I have for many months now been calling on the administration to do more to incapacitate these groups, the nonjihadists. I felt it was a mistake not to do so early on because that actually created the possibility or the eventuality that now we face; that is, that the best organized, best equipped, best trained groups in Syria happen to be the most radical ones. That includes ISIL and of course al-Nusra. By the way, al-Nusra and ISIL fight each other, which adds further complexity.

Last but not least, I think it is important to spend a significant amount of focus on helping our allies in Jordan. If we play out what is happening—if, in fact, ISIS is able to erase this border between Syria and Iraq and establish this Sunni caliphate, their next move logically will be to threaten the Kingdom of Jordan, an incredibly important ally to the United States, to the stability of the region, to Israel, and to others. So we should continue to provide assistance to Jordan in protecting their borders and their future.

These are four goals I hope we will continue to move toward, and I am

hopeful that with the announcement the President made today, it is a first step as we work toward those goals.

A couple of points are important to make, and I do so every time I address this issue of Iraq. The first is this is not about the United States taking sides in a Sunni-Shia civil war. The future of Iraq depends on the people of Iraq. It is up to them to establish a government that functions. It is up to them to provide a secure and safe country where people can prosper. It is up to them to create a political system and a social system where both Sunni and Shia feel as though they have a voice in the governance of their country. This is not about the United States stepping in and saying, We are on the Shia side. In fact, I can tell my colleagues that while this is not uniform, there are many Sunnis within Iraq who do not necessarily sympathize with ISIL and what they are doing. So this is not about the United States engaging itself in a civil war.

This is also not about the United States trying to build a country. This is not about the United States going into Iraq and saying, We have to rebuild Iraq. This is about counterterrorism and this is about the future security of the United States.

Every time I come to the floor, I remind everyone that the reason 9/11 was possible was because Al Qaeda was able to establish a safe haven in Afghanistan, under the protection of the Taliban, and from that safe haven they raised money, they recruited, they plotted, they planned, and they ultimately carried out the most devastating terrorist attack in U.S. history, and we can never allow another similar safe haven to take root.

This is especially true when the group trying to establish such a safe haven—in fact, not just a safe haven but a caliphate run by a radical government—is a group whose expressed goal is to establish that caliphate, to use it to terrorize the people of the United States by attacking us in the United States, in the hopes of driving us out of the Middle East and then destroying Israel and establishing their brand of Islam and forcing it on all the peoples and countries of the region.

We cannot allow such a safe haven to take root. If they are successful in their goal of creating a new country, a new State, this Islamic radical caliphate, we will have in the future grave risks and potentially severe and devastating terrorist attacks against Americans both abroad and here in the homeland. This group has a very clear mandate. They have been very clear about what their goals are, but in order to carry that out successfully, they need an operational space, and we cannot allow them to create one in Iraq. That is what this issue is about. That is why this issue matters.

I know when I say what I have said, I open myself to those voices that say there are warmongers and people who want to go back to war. Absolutely

not. On the contrary. What has happened is, after looking at this issue, studying the lessons of the past 20 years and what we have learned after 9/11 especially, it becomes evident to me that we are going to have to deal with this group. That is not what we are debating. The issue before us that we have to decide is when do we deal with them? Do we deal with them now, when they still have not created that caliphate, or do we deal with them 5 or 10 years down the road when they have established a safe haven and significant operational capacity? It is going to cost a lot more money, potentially many more lives and, in the process, significant terrorist attacks and terrorist risks if we deal with it later. It will cost less money, be more effective, and be a lot less dangerous if we deal with it now.

That must be our goal, to not allow this group ISIS to establish a safe haven of operation in Iraq, or in Syria for that matter, and then give the people of Iraq the opportunity to decide a future for themselves. That is important, which is why this issue of Iran is important.

I have been asked by reporters and others: Should we be working with Iran? My opinion, based on all I have learned regarding this situation and based on factors that are obvious for anyone to see, is we do not share the same goal Iran does. We don't have the same goal. Iran's goal is not simply to defeat ISIL. Iran's goal is to establish a Shia government that oppresses Sunnis and that is responsive to them. That is their goal. What they want to set up in Iraq is a public government under the control of Iran. That is not our goal, that should not be our goal, and it never has been our goal.

Our goal is to ensure that a terrorist organization cannot establish a safe haven, and our hope is that the Iraqi people can create for themselves a government and a country where both Shia and Sunni can live in peace and harmony among each other. That is up to them. We can help them do that, but we can't make them do that. What we can do is everything we can to ensure that this terrorist group doesn't take root. So I think our goals are completely incompatible with Iran.

The other point I would make is we should not do anything to legitimize that regime. That regime is the world's greatest State sponsor of terrorism. In virtually every continent on this planet, Iran has a hand in sponsoring terrorism. So I am not sure how we could possibly work side by side to wipe out terrorism with a government that sponsors terrorism more than any other government on the planet. I caution against that approach as well.

To close the loop, I hope we will spend most of our time focused on what we need to do now and in the future. We have forever to debate who was right and who was wrong about the war in 2003 or the surge in 2007.

Also, I hope the announcement the President made today was the first

step in a multistep process that will allow us to prevent ISIL from establishing the kingdom, the caliphate, and the safe haven they seek. I hope we make clear to the American people what the stakes are for us, that the reason we care about what is happening in Iraq is not because we want to nation build or because we want to force any sort of government on the people of Iraq. Their future belongs to them. It is because we cannot allow a terrorist group that has the stated goal and the increasing capacity of attacking the United States to establish an operational space such as Afghanistan was for Al Qaeda before 9/11.

I hope we will continue to play the important role the Senate plays in speaking out and hoping to give guidance and advice to the Commander in Chief. But as I said yesterday, ultimately, the role of leading on this matter corresponds to the President. Only the President of the United States can come up with a plan that hopefully all of us can unite behind because it is that important for our country and for our future and for our security.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I rise today to discuss the deteriorating situation in Iraq. There has been considerable debate in recent days about what we want to achieve in that country and the importance of achieving so-called political reconciliation in Baghdad. I wish to propose three simple principles that should guide any action we take in Iraq.

No. 1, we should do everything possible to secure our people. No. 2, we should defend our national security interests. No. 3, we should not partner with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

First and foremost, we need to be certain we are doing everything humanly possible to secure the Americans who are still in Iraq. The instability of the situation in the north of that country could quickly devolve into nationwide chaos, and it requires our immediate attention.

We need to be developing and implementing an immediate plan to get out all nonessential American personnel, to get them to safety now. I am deeply concerned, as all of us should be, that our people on the ground will become pawns in a sectarian conflict we cannot control. I am concerned the up to 275 marines who may be deployed to assist in embassy security, along with the 300 additional military advisers that President Obama announced today, will also become targets, isolated in Baghdad.

It is not at all reassuring to have the security in Baghdad provided by either

Shia militias, loosely controlled by the al-Maliki government, or by the Iranian Quds forces themselves or their agents. If we have to rely on either to keep our people safe, we should not be there. Let me repeat that. If we have to rely on either to keep our people safe, we should not be there.

Second, we need to define and then to defend the national security interests of the United States in Iraq. There has been extensive discussion of “political reconciliation” in Iraq and of making any American military action contingent on achieving that ephemeral objective. This makes no sense. Although a political solution to Iraq’s troubles may have been an appropriate goal in 2005 or 2011, it simply may not be feasible in 2014. The time for this sort of argument would have been 3 years ago when America was the most influential voice in Baghdad and we were completing our largest embassy on the planet on the banks of the Tigris River.

But we chose to relinquish that influence when we did not successfully negotiate a status-of-forces agreement with the Iraqis. Much of the blame for that diplomatic impasse lies with the al-Maliki government, but the Obama administration bears considerable responsibility as well. The President campaigned on “ending the war in Iraq” which he defined by removing all of our forces, not winning. So immediate troop withdrawal, not negotiating a proper status-of-forces agreement, was the priority. In the words of Secretary Clinton on CNN on Tuesday, “We did not get it done.” The result is that today we have little or no influence in Baghdad.

It is not my purpose today to relitigate the history of U.S. involvement in Iraq but, rather, to propose what we can do with the circumstances in which we find ourselves right now. Given our current circumstances, any attempt to reconcile a Sunni-Shiite religious conflict that has waged for more than 1,500 years seems either the height of hubris or naivete or both.

Rather than prioritizing an unachievable political solution we have no power to effect, it seems much more practical to focus on what is in the actual national security interests of the United States of America. The most acute security threat to the United States in Iraq is the aggressive movement of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, ISIS, forces out of Syria and into Iraq over the last 6 months. These vicious Sunni fanatics may be relatively small in number, but they make up for it in sheer brutality. Although President Obama dismissed their aggression into Fallujah in January of this year as the terrorist equivalent of the “junior varsity,” recent events suggest they are of a much higher capability.

Indeed, an obvious question the administration should answer is, has the Obama administration ever armed ISIS? Has the administration given lethal weapons to ISIS? We are doing so

to rebels who are fighting alongside ISIS in Syria. It is an obvious question to ask, whether we have, in fact, armed these radical Islamic terrorists as well.

ISIS is much more than a local or even regional threat. They are among the worst of the radical jihadists who attacked us on September 1, 2001, and again on September 11, 2012. They are so bad, in fact, that the “core Al Qaeda,” as President Obama likes to call the terrorist cells in Pakistan and Afghanistan, have renounced them. Their goal is to establish a new Islamic caliphate in the Middle East and northern Africa, from Syria to Iraq. They have publicly announced that when they achieve their ambition in Syria and Iraq, their goal is to move on to Jordan, to Israel, and to the United States of America.

Because of their actions and their stated intent, it would seem a targeted mission to seriously degrade the lethality of ISIS could well be in the national security interests of the United States. Such an action would not require the commitment of American combat forces, but it would require a commitment from the Commander in Chief that this action would not be merely a symbolic message or an effort simply to perpetuate the al-Maliki government in Baghdad.

Instead, it would need to be an expeditious and emphatic demonstration of America’s ability to strike at the terrorists at the time and means of our choosing. If the President needs to respond to an imminent threat to the national security interests of the United States, or to act to an imminent threat to the lives of Americans in Iraq, he has the constitutional authority to do so. However, Congress has the constitutional authority to declare war. So if the President is planning on launching a concerted offensive attack that is not constrained by the exigency of the circumstances, he should come to Congress to seek and to receive authorization for the use of military force. A precondition for any such mission in Iraq should be the utter rejection of any partnership with the Islamic Republic of Iran on which the al-Maliki government is increasingly dependent.

Iran has been the implacable enemy of the United States since 1979, when revolutionaries took 54 American citizens hostage for 444 days, some of the darkest days of our history. Earlier this year, Iran demonstrated that this rapid anti-American hostility is alive and well by trying to get a U.S. visa for one of those hostage takers to serve as their Ambassador to the United Nations, to live in Manhattan with diplomatic immunity. It was one of my proudest days in the Senate to introduce the legislation countering this action that passed unanimously through both Houses of Congress, and that was signed into law by President Obama, stopping known terrorists from entering the United States.

When push comes to shove, the American people understand that Iran

is our enemy. We need to bring that same clarity, that same bipartisan unity to current circumstances in Iraq.

Just because Iran fears ISIS jihadists, it does not follow that we should partner with them in this fight. The enemy of our enemy, in this instance, is not our friend. If we cannot secure our people absent Iranian involvement, we need to get them out. If we cannot strike ISIS in Iraq without Iranian involvement, then we need to look for another means of doing so.

ISIS consists of radical Islamist terrorists who seek to murder Americans. Yet the Iranian regime has over and over demonstrated the same hostile intent. Indeed, it is the leading sponsor of terrorism across the world.

It is deeply concerning that not only Secretary of State John Kerry but also former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel have all signaled in recent days they are actively interested in exploring a partnership with Iran to deal with Iraq.

Indeed, today President Obama publicly suggested: "Iran can play a constructive role." This is the height of foolishness. It is deeply disturbing that so many current and former senior Obama administration officials would share this same misguided and naive view.

There could be no more ill-advised or counter-productive policy for the United States at this moment than to partner with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Rather than partnering with Iran, we should be all the more mindful of the dangers of taking our eye off the ball of Iran's nuclear program, as no doubt Tehran hopes we will in this most recent crisis.

As grim as the threat of ISIS is, it pales in comparison to the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran, given their long and well-documented history of state-sponsored terrorism. Indeed, Iran is working now and has been working for years now to develop nuclear ICBMs for one reason and one reason only, and that is to strike at America and potentially murder millions of Americans. It would be the height of folly to take any action in Iraq that would further embolden Iran, which is already moving to make Iraq a client state in its pursuit of regional hegemony.

We already know how that script plays out. We have seen it in our ally Ukraine, where former President Viktor Yanukovich acted as Vladimir Putin's stooge and planted pro-Russian agents throughout the Ukrainian government and armed forces. But the Ukrainian people refused to accept Russia's attempt to reintegrate them into a 21st century reincarnation of the Soviet Union.

They stood in the Maidan Square, a place I visited just a few weeks ago, and they braved the freezing cold. They braved the murderous army snipers who shot the protesters down in that square, and they stood and demanded freedom. They demanded to stand with America, with Europe, and the West.

Iran, in its attempt to create a modern version, a new version of the Persian Empire, has attempted a similar play on behalf of so-called Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei through the means of the Iraqi regime of Nouri al-Maliki.

Sadly, Iranian forces today permeate both the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi security forces.

America has demonstrated, beyond any shadow of doubt, our offer of liberty to the people of Iraq. Indeed, thousands of our sons and daughters have given their lives in pursuit of freedom in Iraq. But if the Iraqi Government is more interested in forging a relationship with Iran than with the United States, we should not and we cannot attempt to force them to adhere to our political goals for them.

Absent active partners in Iraq who want a closer alliance with America and with our allies, our key objective should be, quite simply, to secure our people, to counteract terrorist threats to our national security, and to make sure that we do not further embolden the Islamic Republic of Iran.

These objectives—not the fantasy of resolving the Sunni-Shiite conflict that has been raging since the death of Muhammad in 632 A.D. or the illusion that we can magically find productive common ground with Iran—should define our policy toward Iraq.

I would like to make one final note. It is my hope that my colleagues will think more broadly about what is happening in the world in Iraq, in Iran, in Russia, and in Libya. We are being faced with options of options of options that have been created by the bad choices our leaders make.

Those guiding our foreign policy at the White House, the State Department, and even, unfortunately, in the Senate have refused to address true dangers posed to Americans at home and abroad. Bad choices inevitably leave us with bad options.

Refusing to recognize the radical religious extremism of individuals who are committed to jihad and have pledged to murder Americans is a bad choice. Refusing to utter the words "radical Islamic terrorists" is a bad choice. Negotiating with terrorists to release terrorist leaders is a bad choice, and considering any kind of deal with Iran is a very bad choice.

In the last 5 years America has receded from leadership in the world. Into that vacuum have stepped nations such as Iran, such as Russia, such as China. As we have abandoned our allies, the consequences have been to make the world a much more dangerous place. America's leadership has never been more critical than it is today.

Until the leaders of our government stop making these bad choices, we will continue to be left with bad options.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Rhode Island.

CJS APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the appropriations minibus that many of us were prepared to move forward on today. I am deeply disappointed that the Republican minority is effectively blocking another bill on this floor from moving forward for consideration and ultimately approval by the Congress.

It is disappointing because I know that the bipartisan work that was done in the committee was absolutely critical and extremely productive. The Appropriations Committee, which I have the privilege of serving on, presented us, this Senate, with three very excellent pieces of legislation. I am disappointed that we are not moving forward to pass them. It is also disappointing because this process gives us the opportunity to shape the spending priorities of the government, to focus on the needs of the American people, and to do so in a way that will be responsive to their needs and we hope improves their opportunities to grow this economy and participate in the economy.

Without appropriations bills, we run the risk of being stuck with a continuing resolution—funding just what we did the last year—perhaps a little less, perhaps a little more in some areas. But it deprives us of focusing on issues that are more sensitive and more critical at this moment to the American public.

Chairman MIKULSKI has done an excellent job leading the Appropriations Committee. As I said from the beginning, she was determined to make it a substantive, respectful, and bipartisan process. The results are reflected in the unanimous or near unanimous committee votes on the bills that are coming to this floor in this minibus, as we call it. So I thank her, obviously, for her leadership.

I also want to thank my colleagues on the relevant subcommittees, Senator MURRAY, in the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee; Senator PRYOR, the chair of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee. Together they have prepared balanced bills that invest in our people, our infrastructure, and in science.

The transportation-HUD bill includes \$550 million for the important TIGER Discretionary Grant Program, which is shared by the entire country but has been particularly critical to Rhode Island in helping us improve our commercial ports and in jump-starting major road projects, including the replacement of a major bridge, the Providence Viaduct on route 95.

Indeed, it is one of the potential choke points on route 95 that will not only affect Rhode Island, but it will affect Massachusetts, the home of the Presiding Officer. It will affect Connecticut. It will bottle up traffic if we don't continue to fix it, improve it, and

make it traffic ready for another several decades.

The bill also maintains robust support for the Airport Improvement Program. One of the things we are very pleased about is the T.F. Green Airport. We are investing about \$100 million in safety improvements, a runway extension, and an expansion. I thank Chairman MURRAY for including this funding in the bill, this general category funding which has been very helpful to the Rhode Island Airport Corporation as it has applied for these grants.

I was particularly delighted last month because Chairwoman MIKULSKI joined me at T.F. Green Airport to look at the improvements, to talk about the issues, and to get a firsthand sense of how her efforts and Senator MURRAY's efforts are translating into real projects throughout the United States.

The bill also includes more than \$3 billion for the Community Development Block Grant Program, again an important program critical to all communities in Rhode Island. It provides more than \$2 billion for homeless assistance grants. There is no portion of the country today that is not facing a very real problem with homeless Americans who need help, assistance, and support.

There is \$75 million for the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, which again helps people who are struggling not only to find a place to live but also to deal with all of the issues of getting by in a very difficult economy.

All of these programs are extremely worthwhile. They serve the Nation—not in one particular area or in one particular State—and they contribute to our productivity—not just for the moment but looking ahead.

We can take, for example, the Commerce-Justice-Science bill with the strong support for NOAA, including funding for fisheries, aquaculture, Sea Grant, ocean exploration, and ocean education—again, initiatives that affect my home State of Rhode Island, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the State of Florida, the State of North Carolina, every coastal area, the gulf coast, et cetera, all critical to our country, to our productivity, to our commerce, and to the livelihood of so many Americans.

We are looking also at investments in the National Science Foundation, fully funding, for example, the request for the EPSCoR Program at nearly \$160 million. This is absolutely critical for many reasons, particularly to make that connection between academic institutions and business enterprises and also to economic development.

The bill also supports, with respect to our criminal justice system, \$376 million for Byrne justice assistance grants and \$181 million for COPS hiring grants—actually putting police officers on the street, increasing our ability to deal with crime and making our communities more livable. This is absolutely critical.

We look at the Agriculture appropriations bill—and I thank Senator PRYOR—because, today, agriculture includes aquaculture, the commercial growing, if you will, of shellfish and other seafood products.

Again, in my State—but not just in my State, in other parts of the country—it is a growing and commercially thriving enterprise which deserves support. In fact, because of federal investments, we have been able to initiate in Rhode Island aquaculture projects that have taken on their own lives and own momentum and are extremely productive.

I am disappointed we are here today only talking about these appropriations bills instead of actually moving forward and passing them.

Another topic that is very frustrating is the fact that this body passed on a bipartisan basis an extension of unemployment insurance, fully paid for, fiscally responsible—a bipartisan bill that went through all of the rigorous steps that required 60 votes to get cloture, and a majority of votes to get final passage. We didn't cut any corners. That is what we had to do, and we did it.

Unfortunately, it has languished in the House of Representatives so now the extension, which as we passed the bill would have been looking backward and forward several months—now it has been totally eclipsed. So we are back working.

I have reached out, and fortunately Senator DEAN HELLER of Nevada has been an extraordinarily thoughtful and crucial leader, along with other colleagues on the other side of the aisle and colleagues on this side of the aisle. So we are beginning again, but I have to express my frustration.

Over 3 million Americans now are without benefits that they would have received had we been able to extend unemployment compensation benefits which were terminated December 28 of last year. These are modest benefits, about \$300 a week, but for people who are looking desperately for work, it could mean the difference between staying in their homes or being forced out, repairing their car, having a telephone if they need it—which we all need to communicate to look for jobs.

So we have to start again. Not only is this the right issue for individual Americans—millions of them—but it is the right issue for our economy.

Economists who look at the unemployment problem will tell us—and in fact they did—if we would have extended the program last December for a full year, this economy would gain 200,000 jobs. We are in no position to turn down 200,000 jobs. In Rhode Island, that is particularly the case. It would have added to our GDP growth, some estimates as high as 0.2 percent, again helping to grow the economy.

I hope we can rejoin this effort and move forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor because for those folks who picked up the Wall Street Journal this morning, this was the headline regarding the health care law: June 19, 2014, "Large Health Plans Set to Raise Rates."

The picture emerging from proposed 2015 insurance rates in the 10 States that have completed their filings, as the States have to do—stretching from Rhode Island to Washington State, in all but one of those 10, the largest health insurer in the State is proposing to increase premiums between 8.5 percent and 22.8 percent for next year.

That is not what the President of the United States promised the American people when he forced through a health care law with only Democrats voting for it in the House and in the Senate. What he said is that by the end of his first term, premiums for families would drop by \$2,500 per family. That is not what we are seeing: Across the board, the largest insurer in each of those 10 States, anywhere between 8.5 percent to 22 percent for next year. It makes us wonder how that is going to sit with the American public when they are faced with these bills.

Republicans have been coming to this floor to talk about the health care law that Democrats in the Senate voted for, the President signed, and we talked about the many alarming side effects—the alarming side effects Americans have been feeling ever since the law has passed.

People are still trying to understand the law, and they are asking the question: How is this actually helping me? That is what people want to know, is how is the law helping them. Much of what they are hearing is not how it is helping them, but how it is hurting them. Once again, an alarming side effect in the front page of the newspaper this morning.

It seems like just about every day we pick up a newspaper and see headlines about another broken promise by the Democrats who voted for the health care law—Democrats who came to the Senate floor and the floor of the House of Representatives and said this is a good thing.

But then, of course, it was NANCY PELOSI, Speaker of the House, who said: First you have to pass it before you get to find out what is in it. As more Americans are finding out what is in it, they continue to be very unhappy with what they are getting.

American families all across the country are finding out that the President's promises didn't come true. They weren't true.

As chairman of the Republican policy committee, I have been looking at the damaging side effects of the health care law around the country and in different States and what I have found meeting people around the country. Here is what I found in North Carolina:

Last Friday there was a headline in the Triangle Business Journal in the

Raleigh-Durham, NC, area on the Affordable Care Act: “ACA forcing majority of [North Carolina] employers to change health care offerings.”

The President said: If you like what you have, you can keep it. The headline in North Carolina is: The law is forcing a majority of employers to change their health care offerings.

The article says:

More than half of North Carolina companies are considering radical changes to the health plans they offer employees—

Not little changes, not little tweaks, radical changes to the health plans they offer employees.

“You might look at raising your deductible to keep premiums lower, or look at what you are covering,” Hegeman says. “Or charging more in terms of co-pay, in order to keep premiums lower.”

It quotes one human resources executive says that companies “. . . might look at raising your deductible to keep premiums lower, or look at what you are covering. . . .”

Those are all considerations because the President made a lot of promises that are not being able to be kept, and people who actually read the law as it was being proposed knew the President’s promises were not going to be able to be kept.

This is a terrifying side effect of the health care law for many people—people who now in North Carolina are worried about these radical changes to their insurance plans. That is what some companies are going to have to do to keep down the costs.

But for many people, the costs keep going up anyway, and we are seeing higher premiums in those 10 States I mentioned in the headlines today, but specifically in North Carolina, here is what WTVD, a television station in Raleigh, reported last month. They did a story entitled, “Blue Cross missing age sales target for ACA could mean higher bills.” So higher bills for North Carolina.

It turns out not enough young and healthy people signed up for the insurance in the State’s ObamaCare exchange.

The President said: Oh, we will get all these young, healthy people signing up, buying insurance that—in my opinion—they don’t need, don’t want, can’t afford, will never use. The President said: We will get all these healthy people signing up.

It didn’t happen. They missed the sales targets in terms of what they expected in terms of the age of those signing up. So the biggest insurer in the State in North Carolina says it may have to raise rates next year.

The news story quoted a woman named Amanda LaRoque. She and her husband own their own business, they pay their own health insurance, and they say their premiums have doubled since they signed up for the Obama health care law. They are now paying \$999 a month for two people—almost \$1,000 a month for two people.

I remember listening to President Obama and President Bill Clinton having a discussion in New York a couple days before the exchange opened. The President was saying: Easier to use than Amazon, and he said: Cheaper than your cell phone bill.

The plan was going to cost less than your cell phone bill.

This couple in North Carolina says they are paying almost \$1,000 a month and their rates are going even higher. So it makes us wonder was the President of the United States again trying to mislead the American people intentionally? Did he not understand the law which was written behind closed doors over there in HARRY REID’s office? Did he not care? Does he still not care? But that is what people are seeing and experiencing as a result of the President’s health care law.

But this couple is not the only one paying more because of the health care law. According to a new analysis by the Manhattan Institute, people all over the country are going to have to pay more—much more—than what the President told them, much more than they ever anticipated.

The Manhattan Institute found that for an average 64-year-old woman in North Carolina, her premiums would have been \$210 a month in 2013, before the ObamaCare mandates and everything else kicked in. In 2014, 1 year later and all the mandates, buying insurance through the ObamaCare exchange her premiums almost triple to \$623 a month. She is paying almost \$5,000 a year more this year than last year because of the President’s health care law that the Democrats voted for in the House and in the Senate. The President said it would lower premiums by \$2,500 a year. Yet she is seeing her premiums go up by \$5,000 a year.

For a 27-year-old man, he would have paid an average of \$80 a month in 2013. Under the President’s health care law, \$217 a month—an extra \$1,600 a year than last year. That is not what the President promised him.

President Obama then goes and gives a speech not that long ago and said: Democrats who voted for this law—and there are a lot of Members of this body that fit this description. Democrats who voted for this law should forcefully defend and be proud of it—forcefully defend and be proud, the President of the United States said just a couple weeks ago. Is there a Senator in this body who is willing to stand and forcefully defend the fact that people in North Carolina are paying double or triple for insurance? Is there anyone who wants to defend this expensive side effect of the health care law?

I know some people have been helped by the law. Some people are paying less for insurance than they would have before, but many people are paying much more. That is because the people who pay less are getting a subsidy from Washington to help hide the rate hikes that everybody else is facing.

President Ronald Reagan once said, “Government doesn’t solve problems; it subsidizes them.” That is exactly what is going on with the President’s health care law. The Democrats who voted for this health care law did not solve the problem with our health care system. They just threw more money at it to hide the fact that the law actually made things worse. People wanted reform that gave them access to quality care, that gave them affordable care. No one wanted more expensive coverage.

I will talk about one more example. That is the devastating side effect of smaller paychecks some families will be facing because of the Democrats’ health care law. Another side effect, smaller paychecks.

The law says employers—including State governments, including local governments, school districts, communities, counties—have to cover people who work 30 hours a week or more and treat them as full-time employees. They have to cover those people with insurance and treat them as full-time employees. That is what the law considers full-time employees.

There was another story in Raleigh, NC, on WTVD. It said State agencies—we are not talking about for-profit businesses. State agencies are looking at cutting the hours of part-time workers to keep them under that 30-hour limit.

The North Carolina Agriculture Department has about 240 part-time employees who are now working more than 30 hours—less than 40, more than 30—240 of these folks at the North Carolina Agriculture Department.

How about the North Carolina Department of Transportation? They have almost 600 people in exactly the same situation. So North Carolina is going to have to look very closely at what to do with those individuals. If the hours are cut back to under 30 hours, that can mean smaller paychecks.

One expert at Duke University told the TV station he expects the State will see 300,000 full-time workers be moved to part time. Local governments, State governments, private employers, they are all having to make these same decisions. Why? Because of the health care law. Those 300,000 workers moved to part time by the definition—not what the man or woman on the street thinks of as the definition of full time, but what the health care law defines it as. That is a big hit to people’s paychecks, and it is another very harmful side effect in the health care law.

It didn’t have to be that way. Republicans have offered solutions for patient-centered health care reform such as increasing the ability of small businesses to get together, join together, negotiate for better rates, expand health savings accounts, allow people to buy insurance that works best for them and their family and shop in other States to do it, and not have to

buy this whole big list of insurance the President says they need when it is not what their family needs. It is not what they need for their kids, for their families, for their spouses, not what they want, not what they can afford, because the President essentially thinks he knows better than American families about their own personal situation. Republicans have offered ideas that would give people the care they need from a doctor they choose at lower costs—not lower costs as a subsidy for some people, but lower costs for everybody. That is what we are working on, lower cost of care.

Republicans are going to keep coming to the floor. We are going to keep offering real solutions for better health care without all of these terrible side effects, because we know the list is there, one side effect after another. They are costly, harmful, some are irreversible, and nothing that the American people wanted.

On the front-page headline today is "Large Health Plans Set to Raise Rates." Insurance rates in 10 States that have completed their filings, stretching from Rhode Island to Washington State, all but one of them, the largest health insurer in the State is proposing to increase premiums between 8.5 and 22 percent for next year. The American people will once again realize that the Democrats and the President who voted for this health care law have broken their trust, broken their promises to the American people, and the American people deserve better.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceed to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. GILLIBRAND). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF PAUL G. BYRON TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

Mr. REID. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 779.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Paul G. Byron, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Florida.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to report the motion.

The 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Paul G. Byron, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Florida.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Richard J. Durbin, Elizabeth Warren, Tim Kaine, Richard Blumenthal, Robert P. Menendez, Barbara A. Mikulski, Debbie Stabenow, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Sherrod Brown, Patty Murray, Tom Harkin, Tom Udall, Christopher A. Coons, Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CARLOS EDUARDO MENDOZA TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to executive session to Calendar No. 780.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Carlos Eduardo Mendoza, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Florida.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. There is a cloture motion at the desk and I ask that it be reported.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to report the motion.

The 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Carlos Eduardo Mendoza, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Florida.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Tom Udall, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Cory A. Booker, Jack Reed, Tim Kaine, Bar-

bara Boxer, Bill Nelson, Jeff Merkley, Christopher A. Coons, Angus S. King, Jr., Richard Blumenthal, Richard J. Durbin, Christopher Murphy, Patty Murray, Charles E. Schumer.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF BETH BLOOM TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA

Mr. REID. I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 781.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Beth Bloom, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to report the motion.

The 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Beth Bloom, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Tom Udall, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Jack Reed, Tim Kaine, Barbara Boxer, Bill Nelson, Jeff Merkley, Christopher A. Coons, Angus S. King, Jr., Richard Blumenthal, Cory A. Booker, Richard J. Durbin, Christopher Murphy, Patty Murray, Charles E. Schumer.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. I now move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.