

Is capable of garnering bipartisan support. The fact that it is already almost July and Congress has failed to act would seem to reflect an appalling indifference to the lives of infants and their families. Our nation is perilously close to the point where it will be impossible to distribute funding to states and localities in order to make a meaningful difference this year. Many at-risk jurisdictions have been forced to lay off trained staff due to cuts and the lack of new resources, even as they are being asked to battle this new threat. Additional resources are needed immediately to protect pregnant women and their infants from Zika and life-altering birth defects.

CDC Director Tom Frieden has stated that the estimated cost of care for a baby with the severe microcephaly caused by the Zika virus could be up to \$10 million per child. If 100 babies are born with this severe form of microcephaly caused by Zika, their care will cost the U.S. economy approximately \$1 billion—roughly the cost of the bipartisan package passed by the Senate. If the inaction in Congress persists, the U.S. and its territories could easily see dozens or even hundreds of infants born with preventable microcephaly, an outcome that would be not only a human tragedy but a significant economic burden.

Once again, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to reconvene the conference committee to produce a responsible Zika funding bill that can pass Congress as quickly as possible. If this does not take place, Congress will bear the full responsibility for Zika-related birth defects across the nation in the coming years.

Sincerely,

African American Health Alliance, AFSCME, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, American College of Nurse-Midwives, American College of Preventive Medicine, American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Public Health Association, American Society for Clinical Pathology, Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs, Association of Public Health Laboratories, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, Big Cities Coalition, Children's Environmental Health Network, Coalition for Health Funding, Easter Seals, Every Child By Two, Genetic Alliance, Healthcare Ready, HIV Medicine Association, Infectious Diseases Society of America, March of Dimes, National Association of Community Health Centers, National Association of County and City Health Officials.

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, National Birth Defects Prevention Network, National Coalition of STD Directors, National Environmental Health Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Network of Public Health Institutes, National Organization for Rare Disorders, Public Health Institute, Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition, RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association, Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America, Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine, Trisomy 18 Foundation, Trust for America's Health.

Mr. REID. These organizations are blasting this Republican conference report because they want real legislation to fund Zika. They call on Congress to pass a bill that “provides appropriate

funding levels for all aspects of Zika response, including contraception for women who wish to avoid pregnancy, and to prevent the sexual transmission of Zika.”

They want a bill that “does not draw funds from other important public health priorities, including Ebola efforts.”

They want a bill that “does not place unreasonable restrictions on Zika funding, which would hinder the ability of agencies to respond to the virus given that its course is unpredictable.”

They want a bill that “lays a foundation with FY2016 funding that can be built upon responsibly in subsequent fiscal years, since Zika will be a long-term challenge; and is capable of garnering bipartisan support.”

The letter continues: “The fact that it is already almost July and Congress has failed to act would seem to reflect an appalling indifference to the lives of infants and their families.”

These are not Democrats saying this, these are these public health organizations. They are aghast at what Republicans are doing.

Instead of accepting their bill is a failure that is going nowhere, Republicans are making these threats. Yesterday the assistant Republican leader came to the floor and said Republicans are going to abandon Zika funding negotiations after this vote. The Republican Senate is on pace to work the fewest days the Senate has worked in more than 60 years. Sixty years ago, the country was much smaller. There was a lot less people and a lot less business, but even with that, we are working less than they did 60 years ago. In 2 weeks, the Senate plans to leave Washington for 7 weeks, which is the longest summer recess since we can remember. Is it too much to ask Republicans to work until we have done our job in giving States and territories the resources they need to fight Zika and protect women? Public health organizations don't think so and we don't either. Republicans need to get serious about sending President Obama the full \$1.9 billion that doctors, researchers, nurses, and public health experts say is needed to fight Zika. Every moment Republicans delay, there are other cases of Zika in innocent women, which affects their children more than one can imagine.

Mr. President, will the Chair please announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will re-

sume consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 2577, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Conference report to accompany H.R. 2577, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the conference report will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise because I want to share a few words on the Zika component of the conference report on the MILCON-VA appropriations bill, which will be on the floor shortly.

Unfortunately, but maybe not surprisingly, my friends on the other side of the aisle very well bowed down to their friends on the hard right and ridged this bill on Zika with poison pill provisions. If there was ever a bill designed to fail, it is what the Republicans have put together on Zika today. This bill is not only going to fail, it was designed to fail from the very beginning.

Democrats have pushed for over 4 months for legislation on Zika, ever since the CDC and the administration requested \$1.9 billion in emergency funding to deal with the threat. We tried to work with our friends on the other side of the aisle, but after we compromised at \$1.1 billion, after we reached a supposed agreement, and passed it in this body with 89 votes—the overwhelming majority from both parties—Republicans turned around, without any consultation with Democrats in the House and Senate, and rammed through a wish list of poison pill riders that defeat the very purpose of the effort. Rather than working with Democrats to produce something both parties can support, Republicans abandoned compromise in favor of an extreme rightwing bill.

These changes reflected in the conference report have poisoned the bill. It now cuts Ebola funding by \$107 million. It cuts funding for the Affordable Care Act by \$543 million. It sets a precedent that emergencies have to be funded when, in the past, they have not been. Worst of all, it restricts funding for family planning services provided by health centers and providers like Planned Parenthood.

We know Zika can be sexually transmitted. We know it poses the biggest danger to pregnant women and their unborn children, many of whom rely on health centers and Planned Parenthood as their primary health care provider, but Republicans cannot miss a chance to whack Planned Parenthood, even if their services are exactly what can help prevent the spread of this debilitating virus.