

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 19, 2017

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Tuesday, September 19; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Francisco nomination, with the time until the cloture vote equally divided between the two leaders or their designees; further, that if cloture is invoked, all postcloture time expire at 12:15 p.m. and the Senate vote on confirmation of the Francisco nomination with no intervening action or debate; finally, that following disposition of the Francisco nomination, the Senate recess until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly conference meetings.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of our Democratic colleagues.

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

The Senator from Massachusetts.

HEALTHCARE

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, it has been over 7 weeks since the Senate voted on three different versions of the Republican bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Each of these terrible bills would have stripped healthcare coverage from tens of millions of Americans and raised costs for millions more.

During this 7 weeks that followed the last of those votes, no one has clamored for another try. Phones aren't ringing off the hook with calls for Republicans to go one more round in their effort to rip up the Medicaid Program. Letters and emails aren't pouring in asking for legislation to jack up the costs for people with preexisting conditions. Tweets and Facebook posts don't demand that insurers get the chance to drop coverage for mental health issues and addiction treatment.

Instead, the families I have spoken with have told me, often through tears, that they are so relieved that Republicans stepped back from the brink and came to their senses. They are breathing just a little bit easier knowing that Medicaid will be there for their elderly parent in a nursing home or the neighbor down the street who uses a wheelchair. That tight, anxious, terrifying feeling in their chests has eased up be-

cause they don't have to worry about losing the health insurance that helps pay for their asthma medication or their children's heart surgery.

Here we are again, back on the floor of the Senate, engaged in a terrible and familiar ritual: begging the Republicans not to gut our health insurance system for the sake of political games.

If the American people want these cruel repeal bills to be thrown in the garbage, where they belong, then what are we doing here? Well, Senate Republicans are pretty desperate. This month, they learned from the Senate Parliamentarian—the independent umpire here in the Senate who gets the final say on how the procedural rules work—that the legislative instructions they passed back in January to kick off their whole effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act will expire on September 30. Once that happens, Republicans would have to start over with a new set of instructions if they want to be able to use the special Senate rules that allow them to jam this bill through without a single Democratic vote. So the Republicans have dug through the trash and pulled out an old draft of a bill they think could get the job done. It is called the Cassidy-Graham proposal, named after the Republican Senators who put it together.

You might think that after months and months of failed attempts, the Republicans would have something new to offer. You might think that after their last three terrible repeal bills went up in flames, the Republicans would propose something more reasonable this time around. You might think that—but no. This is just the same terrible set of policies with a fresh coat of paint and a new name.

The Cassidy-Graham proposal completely eliminates the parts of the ACA that help families afford health insurance. Do you think insurance is expensive right now? Just wait for Cassidy-Graham. Need help paying for your chemotherapy or your surgery? Good luck. Cassidy-Graham says you are on your own.

What about all the people who count on Medicaid to help out, people who have health insurance but have a baby who was born 8 weeks too early and who now needs breathing equipment and special therapists; people who worked hard all their lives but who couldn't save enough to make it three decades in a nursing home; people who use a wheelchair or need a home health aide to come by so they can live independently? What happens to them? Well, with massive cuts to Medicaid, the latest Republican proposal turns America's back on babies, on seniors, on people with disabilities, on our families and our friends and our neighbors who need our help.

I could go on and on about this, but let's get one thing straight about this latest Republican plan: It is not more reasonable. It is not more moderate. It is not bipartisan. And it is definitely not something that families in this

country want. It is just another version of the same old cruel, heartless, shameless plan that Republicans have spent the last 8 months trying to jam down the throats of the American people.

Don't take my word for it. Doctors' groups, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and a bunch of other medical specialties, pulled the fire alarm last week when Cassidy and Graham released their proposal. They sent Congress a letter saying it could cost millions of Americans their healthcare coverage. They begged Republicans not to start down this road again. Instead, the doctors asked Congress to do something that makes a whole lot more sense: Focus on ways to improve health insurance markets in this country, starting with the discussions that have taken place in the HELP Committee over the last 2 weeks. That is because there is another important end-of-September deadline coming up—the date when insurance companies have to set their prices for next year's insurance premiums.

Over the last couple of weeks, the two Senators who run the HELP Committee—Senator ALEXANDER on the Republican side and Senator MURRAY on the Democratic side—have held a series of hearings on policies that we could pass before the end of September to help lower premiums and make sure that when you buy health insurance, you get coverage that actually means something.

I sit on that committee, and, like most of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, I have been to each of the four hearings we held on this issue.

Senators ALEXANDER and MURRAY have also opened up the discussion to every single Senator so that even those not assigned to the committee can come and meet the witnesses and talk about how to make healthcare better. We have traded ideas. We have talked to Governors. We talked to State insurance commissioners. We talked to doctors and to patients. And not everyone sees things exactly the same way. We have argued back and forth and put a lot of different ideas on the table. We have spent hours talking about how to improve healthcare in this country.

We have 12 days left before the end of September. It is not always this simple, but this time there really is a clear tradeoff. We can either use those 12 days to let Republicans burn down healthcare in this country, or we can use those 12 days to pass a bill that would stabilize healthcare coverage for millions of Americans.

The Republicans are hoping to slip below the radar screen, to sneak the repeal of healthcare coverage across the finish line just when we let down our guard. Well, I have news for the Republicans who want to go down this road: I see you. The American people see you. And we will fight you every step of the way, for as long as it takes and for as many more rounds as you want to go, to stop your ugly bill in its