

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session.

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The Senator from New Jersey.

PUERTO RICO AND U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS RECOVERY EFFORT

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I appreciate the words from all the colleagues I have seen. It is great to see bipartisan sentiments about dealing with the most powerful hurricanes in recorded history. These hurricanes have left thousands of families homeless, destroying infrastructure, and leaving most people without power for the foreseeable future. There are thousands of individual stories of loss of life, of loss of possessions, of everything people own, devastated by this storm.

What is important to me now is that we turn these words into action. I am grateful for the leadership we are seeing from the State of Texas and the State of Florida, but I want to focus in on what is happening in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. We know, right now, close to 31.5 million American citizens on these islands are on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe, including the 3.4 million people who live in Puerto Rico and over 100,000 Americans on the U.S. Virgin Islands. The American citizens living in Puerto Rico are part of a population that is bigger than the States of Wyoming, Vermont, North Dakota, and Alaska combined, but they don't have eight Senators representing them in this body—working for them, fighting for them.

When Superstorm Sandy hit New Jersey, I know the constant work Senator MENENDEZ, I, and my predecessor Senator Frank Lautenberg put into working on making sure our communities could recover. We don't have direct Senators representing this incredible population of Americans. They don't have folks here every single day who are pressing for the interests of these Americans, for their safety, their security, their lives. We have to—the 100 of us—step up to make sure that we are focusing on the interests of our fellow Americans after what has been one of the worst storms in recorded history.

The Americans in Puerto Rico pay taxes. They love this country. They serve in the military. In fact, they serve in the military at a rate almost twice as high as the general U.S. population. These are patriots. They are our

brothers and our sisters. These Americans deserve action from this body and from the President of the United States.

Puerto Rico's Governor has spoken directly to this crisis, noting that just 40 percent of the residents of Puerto Rico have access to drinking water—meaning that 2 million American citizens right now in Puerto Rico do not have access to clean drinking water. This is a serious crisis.

More than this, we know the vast majority of Puerto Rican residents still don't have electricity. They are struggling to access food. They do not have basic means of communications on the island, even to family here. They can't access bank accounts. Their sanitation systems have come to a complete standstill. Access to basic medications—often urgently needed medication and healthcare—is under threat.

It is estimated that it is going to take months before power comes back, and recovery and rebuilding will take years for the islands. The next few weeks of recovery are critically important in the effort to save lives.

I saw in Superstorm Sandy how it wasn't just the hurricane itself that took lives; in fact, in my city, it was in the hours and days after that people lost lives. We know that right now in Puerto Rico, every minute, every hour, every day we wait to get critical aid—necessary aid—our failure to act could mean the difference between life and death or between grave suffering and relieving that suffering for hundreds of thousands of people in Puerto Rico, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands.

We cannot afford to wait any longer to better mobilize support and resources and help our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands right now. I hope that over time we are able to develop larger and more comprehensive aid packages, such as those being discussed for survivors of the hurricanes in Florida and Texas. The urgency we have in Puerto Rico right now, the urgency we have to provide vital security, energy, food, and health needs—we must answer that urgency with action.

Puerto Rico needs U.S. military, disaster, and humanitarian assistance to maintain order and provide security, water, food, and fuel. Puerto Rico needs additional first responders, and they need generators, emergency vehicles, and fuel. Also, Puerto Rico needs to see that its government—the U.S. Government—will respond the way we have for other disasters.

There cannot be a double standard when it comes to Americans. We are one country. We are one Nation. Whether it was Hurricane Sandy in New Jersey and New York or Hurricanes Harvey and Irma that ravaged Texas and Florida, when our Nation sees a natural disaster destroy the homes of thousands, take lives, knock down power—when a challenge like that comes to the United States of

America, we must be there for our citizens. Yet I have read so many heart-breaking stories. This shows the lack of urgency, the lack of being present, the lack of being there when we are needed.

The Washington Post reported that when journalists were looking to go and provide coverage—somehow journalists are making it there to report on the extent of the damage—they were in a remote area of Puerto Rico when local residents saw them. Their first response was simply to ask: Are you FEMA? Are you our government? Are you coming to address the crisis?

Right now Americans are suffering. Right now Americans are facing devastation and potentially death in these hours and these days.

I worry about this body now heading toward Thursday or Friday. How can we in good conscience go back to our homes this weekend, knowing that hundreds of thousands of American citizens in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands may be homeless, may not have shelter, may not have food, and may not have water? We cannot allow our fellow Americans to fall deeper into this crisis.

Nosotros somos gente de esperanza; somos gente de fe. Pero nuestra historia siempre ha sido una que conecta oraciones y palabras con acciones. Necesitamos actuar ahora.

We are a people of hope; we are a people of faith. But our history has always been one of matching prayers and words with actions. We must act now.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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.

HEALTHCARE

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, first of all, I rise with a sigh of relief that the decision has been made not to go forward with a vote on a very divisive healthcare bill.

More importantly today, I rise to say this is really an opportunity for us to work together to get something done—something very positive—as it relates to healthcare costs and healthcare coverage for the people whom we all represent in our States and the people across the country. I am hopeful we will see action soon, and I am hopeful it will be this week when we can come together around very good work that is being done in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee with our two great leaders—Senator ALEXANDER and Senator MURRAY.

They have been holding a number of committee meetings and forums, and I am very pleased to have participated in those. We have had great bipartisan participation in focusing on how to stabilize the current insurance marketplace. We know that has to be step one

if we are going to bring down rates, bring down costs, and create a path forward so more insurance companies are participating in the current system. I have great confidence that we can come together and get that done. It needs to get done immediately because decisions are being made about rates this week, and I am hopeful we can take action on that this week.

Mr. President, we have two other things that are very important—open dates that are looming by the end of the week. One is for the Children's Health Insurance Program, which covers 9 million American children across the country. In Michigan, we call it MICHild. We have children today who can go to the doctor and parents who can take their children to the doctor because of the MICHild Program. The Federal funding for that ends on September 30, this weekend, if we do not take action.

This is another piece of good news because the distinguished chairman of the Finance Committee, Senator HATCH; the distinguished ranking member, Senator WYDEN; others; and I have introduced a bipartisan bill that will extend that program for an additional 5 years. It needs to get done this week. It is a bipartisan effort, and I am hopeful that can get done as well.

We have community health centers in our country—our federally qualified community health centers—whose funding runs out, again, this weekend. Funding health centers has strong bipartisan support. Senator ROY BLUNT and I, along with a total of 70 out of 100 Members of the Senate, have joined in a letter to continue the funding for health centers. That needs to get done right away. In addition to that, there are what we call certain health extenders or policies that are bipartisan that can be done together as well.

We see a picture of important efforts of stabilizing the insurance markets to bring down costs, creating more opportunity for competition in the marketplaces, continuing the Children's Health Insurance Program, continuing the funding for health centers, which are so critical in communities in every one of our States, where people are getting the care they need at their local health centers.

Bringing those things together can be done. Now, it is a lot of work to do that in a couple of days, but these are bipartisan efforts that can be done together to show that in fact we can come together and get things done. I know the people in Michigan want us to do that. They want us to work together to get things done. They want us to focus on lowering costs for healthcare and increasing coverage, and they are anxious to see that we can come together to do that.

I am hopeful. It is only Tuesday, and I am hopeful, with the remaining days of the week, given the bipartisanship that is there and the agreements that have been made on legislation already, that we could go into high gear in the

next few days and come together and have a positive story, a good news story to tell at the end of this week about what we are able to do, working together, to be able to fix problems in the healthcare system and to be able to continue very important programs that provide healthcare for children and for families in local communities around the country.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

PUERTO RICO RECOVERY EFFORT

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I had the opportunity yesterday, along with the Coast Guard and the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico, JENNIFER GONZÁLEZ, to visit San Juan, Puerto Rico, to see firsthand some of the devastation that has impacted this U.S. territory. I would summarize it by saying that what I saw were more than 3.5 million American citizens potentially on the verge of a serious and growing humanitarian crisis.

There are a lot of reasons for this. The first is that Puerto Rico has been in the eye of not one but three storms. The first was Hurricane Irma, which impacted it a few weeks ago, followed by the devastation of Hurricane Maria, and preexisting these two things was a very significant fiscal crisis that placed extraordinary constraints on the ability of the territory's government both to prepare for the storm and now to respond to it.

Our traditional model of hurricane response—one that, unfortunately, because of numerous storms, I have come to know well as a resident of Florida—is that FEMA basically arrives in support of the State. When Florida gets hit by a storm and Texas gets hit by a storm, FEMA comes in to the State and tells the State: We are here to help. Tell us where to go, tell us what you need, and we will provide those resources to the places you want. It works that way. The President issues an emergency declaration, and it opens up FEMA and other disaster relief, and then the State government directs that assistance and tells them: This is what we need, this is where we need it, and this is what we can handle on our own. This model will not work in Puerto Rico. It will not work foremost because, as I stated earlier, the financial and fiscal constraints have limited its capacity to build its own internal ability to respond.

They had just finished repairing the damage from Irma a few weeks ago. So, literally, there are not nearly enough basic things like those wooden poles to hold up the electric lines or the transformers that are attached to them or

even the lines themselves, and, in many cases, the fuel, power, and crews to get to the work sites.

It will not work because, in many cases, the government of Puerto Rico still does not have a full assessment of the damage of the storm. While communication in San Juan is severely limited, in most of the other areas of the big island and smaller islands, communication is nonexistent.

Something was brought to my attention firsthand yesterday when we visited one of the Coast Guard centers and watched. Much of the response they are conducting there is limited to a paper map on the wall with some sticky note pads and four landlines on which they hope people can call in and get updates on what they are seeing in the field from a satellite phone. Hopefully, that has improved over the last 24 hours as more Coast Guard vessels have come in to support communications. But we still have large parts of Puerto Rico that have not communicated with the rest of the island, the government, or the outside world, for that matter, going on to today.

There are also logistical challenges. In most of the 50 States—certainly in my home State of Florida, we saw the largest power restoration effort in the history of the world. At least that is what they are claiming. Literally, we saw hundreds of those bucket trucks from all over the United States—all 50 States and even Canada—coming in with prearranged contracts and their crews to restore power. Even with that dramatic level of response, there were people without power until late this weekend, and there are still a couple thousand people in Florida who have no power.

You can't drive a convoy of trucks into Puerto Rico. They have to come in on a barge, and those barges take 7 days from Jacksonville and 5 days from Miami, plus whatever time it takes to travel and position those crews to get there. You not only have to deliver the crews, you have to deliver the supplies in order to be able to restore power.

What is the practical impact of not having power? Having no power is not simply an inconvenience; for many people it is life and death. Imagine an area outside of San Juan where someone is a diabetic and depends on insulin that needs to be refrigerated. That medicine has gone bad by now if they haven't run out. Imagine someone who needs dialysis twice a week. It has been longer than that since they have had it. Imagine if someone needs chemotherapy if they have cancer. That is not going to happen this week or next unless things change.

These are real challenges, and I raise them only because this is a disaster that will require an intensity of effort on behalf of the Federal Government that you would not traditionally see in a storm that impacts the mainland for the reasons I have outlined—and many more.

Now, the good news is, earlier today you saw the White House engage even

more in terms of some of the things they are doing. There are more Department of Defense assets and, as a result of some restoration at the airport, the ability to land more planes more quickly. So, again, more things are coming in. The port opened fairly quickly, but the challenges remain.

Even if today we could approve \$10 billion in assistance and somehow figured out a way to deliver it to Puerto Rico in the next 24 hours, they would still be challenged to take it from the airport to the seaport and deliver it to the places that need it the most because there are roads that are still not clear, because we still don't have a full assessment of where the damage is and where the need is most and, quite frankly, because there are probably roads and bridges in parts of Puerto Rico that will collapse if one of these big trucks drive over them.

I say this because there is only one entity in the world with the capacity to respond to all these various issues; that is, the Federal Government of the United States. Leveraging the power of the Department of Defense and an assortment of other agencies, it remains the only institution certainly in our country—and probably in the world—with a capacity to respond quickly and effectively to the crisis at hand.

While response to this storm will take a significant amount of patience, it will also take a significant amount of urgency. For each day that goes by, this crisis will get worse, not better. I fear that if, in fact, there is not enough urgency in the response, we will be talking about a very different set of stories in the days to come.

I hope I am wrong, with all of my heart, but I fear that when communication lines come back up and when we start getting more access to some of these areas that have been cut off, we are going to start learning that the toll and the impact of the storm is far worse than we had imagined. I pray with all my heart that someone will watch this video on YouTube one day and say: Oh, look, he was exaggerating. It wasn't that bad after all. I hope that is what happens, but I fear it will not, and every day that goes by, it will only get worse.

I don't believe it is fair to say that the response up to this point is because some people don't care or because they haven't paid enough attention to it. I honestly think it is just a challenge that is unique and that requires us to respond to it in ways we wouldn't traditionally respond, for the factors I have just pointed out.

In most places on the mainland, if not all, the States have a certain capacity internally to address this, but Puerto Rico, for the challenges I have just outlined—and particularly because of the storm that just passed—has already had many of those resources depleted.

There is positive news today. The USS *Comfort*, a ship that is a hospital ship, is on its way, but again it will

take it a number of days to get there. The Federal Government has agreed to a 100-percent Federal match. It usually means the Federal Government paid a portion of it and the States pay the rest. The Federal Government, for the next 180 days, has agreed to 100 percent payment of these services, and that will be critical because these restoration crews are going to want to know how their costs are going to be paid if they show up and begin to restore power.

I just think it is imperative that we don't lose focus and don't lose sight of what is at hand because there are over 3 million American citizens in danger. A number of them—perhaps in the thousands—already have existing vulnerabilities and are in severe danger of losing their life and extraordinary human suffering.

I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who, throughout the day, have expressed a tremendous amount of interest in wanting to know how they can be helpful and what they can do. I think the most important thing we need to do now is to continue to drive the sense of urgency, to do all we can to bring to bear all of the resources the Federal Government can bring to assist in this recovery. Then we will be able to work together on not just rebuilding Puerto Rico but helping her to rebuild so she is stronger, more prosperous, and more stable than ever.

With that, I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RUBIO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I am not sure exactly what those words mean, but I know it allows me to speak so I am glad to have done it.

I thank you for your leadership on the natural disasters we are having, particularly in Puerto Rico. There are 3.4 million American citizens who are living in conditions that nobody in this country should have to tolerate. They are without fuel, they are without food, they are without water, they are without energy, and they are without electricity. Some reports have said it is going to be months before that electricity is repaired. We have to do everything we can in this body to make sure these American citizens are supported and that they can rebuild, and I know the Presiding Officer feels the same way. We have to work together to do this.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, that is not the reason I am coming to the floor today. I wanted to say a word about healthcare now that the decision has been made, apparently, to not even have a vote on this latest version of the repeal and replace

bill. This was going to be, I think, the fourth time we had a vote to repeal the Affordable Care Act. The House of Representatives, over the last 7 years, has voted to repeal the Affordable Care Act somewhere on the order of 67 times or almost 70 times. They have gone back to their constituents year after year after year saying they voted to repeal the Affordable Care Act; that it was a Socialist takeover of the United States of America that they were trying to correct. They distorted what the Affordable Care Act actually was. I am not going to litigate that today.

It is clear, from my perspective in Colorado, whether people support the Affordable Care Act or whether they don't, it often turns on—not always—what party they are in or whether they supported President Obama or whether they didn't. I say not always because I get a lot of email and have people in my townhalls who aren't Democrats but who have preexisting conditions or whose children have preexisting conditions who have health insurance for the first time as a result of the Affordable Care Act.

Having said all that, whether they support the Affordable Care Act or whether they don't, in my State—and I bet it is true all over the United States of America—people are deeply dissatisfied with the way they interact and their families interact and their small businesses interact with the American healthcare system. They should be because it doesn't work very well. I am not talking about the Affordable Care Act. I am talking about the Affordable Care Act, plus our healthcare system. They are not the same thing, and we should be addressing that.

We should be addressing the costs in our system. We should be addressing the lack of transparency in our system. We should be making sure people in the richest country in the world have access to health insurance, but they also have to have access to quality care. In too many rural areas in Colorado—and it is true all over America—there are not enough primary care doctors, not enough primary care nurses. We are not delivering healthcare in those places very efficiently, and we are not delivering it well enough, especially when we know a lot of our veterans live in those communities, and we know increasingly there is a profound opioid addiction that needs to be dealt with.

After 7 years of saying repeal, repeal, repeal and then some years of saying repeal and replace, we have now wasted 7 months of the American people's time on an entirely partisan effort to try to pass two bills that could not have been more unresponsive to the critics of ObamaCare in Colorado, to say nothing of the supporters. So it is not a surprise to me that the last attempt failed, and it is not a surprise to me that people weren't even going to vote on this bill because it is such a terrible bill that they didn't want to vote on it. So they have withdrawn it, which is

good for the American people, except the people in Colorado are still facing challenges in healthcare, including challenges from the Affordable Care Act. There, I said it. I voted for it.

There are things we should fix, and one of those things is a problem that is common—I heard both Members of the Republican Party on the Finance Committee and Democrats on the Finance Committee yesterday at the hearing talk about it—which is the problem that people have in the individual market affording insurance. They say to me, as somebody who voted for the Affordable Care Act: Hey, Michael. You have required us to buy something—insurance because of the individual mandate—that in my area is too expensive because there is not enough competition of insurers, and the deductible is so high it is of no use to me and my family. Why would you make me buy something like that?

I think that is a completely legitimate criticism of the bill. It is important to recognize that when we are talking about this group of people who are very important, it is 7 percent of the population that is covered in America—7 percent. Ninety three percent of the people are getting their insurance someplace else—from their employer, from Medicare, from Medicaid. This is 7 percent we are talking about.

By the way, the issue around that 7 percent—not the people—the issue around that 7 percent, that is what has consumed our politics for the last 7 years. It is not how to make it less expensive for 100 percent of the American people, not how to make it more transparent for 100 percent of the American people, more predictable for 100 percent of the American people but what are we going to do to cover 7 percent. Of those, the folks who aren't getting subsidies, are about 1 percent of people who are insured in America. I say that not to diminish those people at all because they are struggling—and I meet them all the time in my State—I say it to show just how small that set of issues is and how easily they could be resolved by the U.S. Congress if we could work together instead of having this pitched battle about healthcare, instead of calling each other names and Bolshevik takeover and all the rest.

Fortunately, there is a solution that is being worked on not in the Finance Committee but in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. The two leaders of that committee—LAMAR ALEXANDER, who is the Republican chair, and PATTY MURRAY, who is the Democratic ranking member, are among two of the finest legislators in this body. Time after time after time, even when Washington has not worked, they have managed to lead that committee to what LAMAR ALEXANDER refers to as a result. It has come to the floor after going through a process in our committee, an amendment process. It has come to the floor for an amendment process, whether we were reforming the FDA or rewriting the El-

ementary and Secondary Education Act, which used to be known as No Child Left Behind. That bill actually got a unanimous vote in our committee—a committee that has on it BERNIE SANDERS from Vermont and RAND PAUL from Kentucky. That is quite an achievement.

So I have absolute confidence in their ability to deal with this set of issues related to this 7 percent of our population. And I hope that bipartisan process will then become a model or a foundation for the work we need to do on healthcare going forward. We have to turn the page on the last 7 years or 8 years of these repeal votes.

From my perspective, having failed to repeal, the answer can't be to say: We will not help you fix the Affordable Care Act because if we participate in the process to fix the Affordable Care Act, it somehow legitimizes the Affordable Care Act.

You should not hold the position that if you fail to repeal, you can't fix it. If you are going to repeal it, repeal it. And I think we know where that has gone. If you are not going to repeal it, you better be part of fixing it, or you are going to own the problem.

There are a lot of people on this side who want to address that issue, and I believe there are a lot of Republicans who want to address that issue. We are now out of excuses for why we can't do it because Graham-Cassidy has been pulled, as it should have been because that bill, far from stabilizing our insurance system, would have actually made it worse, would have injected even more volatility.

Sometimes people say: Well, don't you think there is already volatility in the system? My answer to that is yes, I do. That is why we have to fix it. The last thing we need to do is make it more volatile. The last thing we need to do is make matters worse. We should stabilize it, based on the bipartisan testimony we have had in the HELP Committee.

The other thing it does—and the Senator from Minnesota is here, so I am going to stop—the other thing it does is it throws millions of people off of insurance. This is not a healthcare bill. It is not a healthcare bill; it is “we are going to take your healthcare away” bill. It couldn't be sustained in front of the American people. They wouldn't even vote on it because they knew how bad it was. We had no hearings before yesterday's Finance Committee. It is like watching “Veep.” It is not the way the government ought to work. So they have an excuse for a hearing. They decide to have the hearing. The Congressional Budget Office report, which we should have had months to look at, if not weeks, comes out in the middle of the hearing and tells us that millions of people are going to lose their health insurance as a result of this bill—flying completely in the face of President Trump's promises.

Let's get this short-term thing done, let's stabilize the individual market,

which we need to do, and then let's address healthcare in a bipartisan way, and I will accept President Trump's goals for what it should look like. Let's make sure everybody is covered at a lower price, with higher quality. That is what he promised on the campaign trail, and we have the opportunity to deliver that if we are willing to work in a bipartisan way.

I know that is what people in Colorado want out of this place. They are so tired of the Affordable Care Act being litigated in this way, and it is clear that the repeal effort has failed. But that is not enough. We have to continue to fix the system. And I wish LAMAR ALEXANDER and PATTY MURRAY all the best as we try to do this in the HELP Committee, and then I hope Democrats and Republicans will support that effort on this floor, and we can actually do something useful, after all of these years, for the American people and their families and their small businesses.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

MS. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I first rise today to thank my colleague for his comments. I am very pleased that this process may now move forward—the one that was stymied because of a bill that, as my friend from Colorado just pointed out, would kick millions of people off of healthcare, jack up their premiums, and really was an effort to pass the buck to the States without the bucks. I think that is one of the reasons we saw our Republican Governors in Nevada and in Ohio opposing this effort. I thank him for his leadership on the relevant committees and his passion for this issue.

I would agree with him that people in my State, the State of Minnesota, just like the State of Colorado—we have a lot of independent sorts in both our States, and they want to see us get things done. We now have the opportunity to do that.

MR. BENNET. Mr. President, might I interrupt?

MS. KLOBUCHAR. Is there a question?

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

MR. BENNET. I want to observe—I don't know how to phrase this question, but the Senator from Minnesota made such an excellent point about dropping this on the States. I hadn't made that point. That was one of the things that came up over and over again in the Finance Committee hearing, was that in the name of federalism, we were basically imposing on all of the States the obligation to decide that they had to reinvent their healthcare system over the next 2 years whether that was something they wanted to do or not. I am glad the Senator raised that. I also want to thank her for her leadership.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Thank you.

As we wait for those bipartisan negotiations—and we hope we will get something soon, because I have seen reinsurance be a positive force in my State for bringing some of the rates down in the exchange. The average for the preliminary rates was 20 percent when our Republican legislature joined with our Democratic Governor to get this passed—20 percent reduction. We would like to see that rolled out on a national basis.

(The remarks of Ms. KLOBUCHAR pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 268 are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

CLIMATE DISRUPTION

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, climate disruption is the seminal challenge of our generation. It affects everything from our farms to our forests, to our fisheries. We see the impact from disappearing ice sheets and melting permafrost and glaciers. We see it in the coral reefs. We see it in the moving insect populations. We see it in the more powerful storms.

In response, communities across our globe are transforming their energy economies. They are working on energy efficiency, certainly—more efficient appliances and a little more mileage in their cars. Yet many are also working to transform their energy economies from a fossil fuel energy economy to a renewable energy economy.

How much do you know about the changes that are underway? Let's find out.

Welcome to episode 5 of the Senate Climate Disruption Quiz. Here we go. Here is the first question.

This August, an electric 500 horsepower Tesla Model X SUV raced a 740 horsepower Lamborghini Aventador SV in a quarter-mile drag race. Who won? Was it the 500 horsepower electric Tesla or the 740 horsepower Lamborghini? Was the race called off or did they tie?

Take a moment. Feel free to lock in your answer.

The answer is, the Tesla won the race. The Tesla won the race, despite the fact that it had far less horsepower. In fact, it set a record for an SV in a quarter mile. It beat the Lamborghini by about 500ths of a second.

It just goes to help demonstrate the incredible torque and acceleration that comes with electric power, and if you have ever tried driving a Tesla and had it accelerate so fast that it pinned you against the back of the seat, you would know what I am talking about.

OK. Let's turn to question No. 2. Taking a page from the white roof movement, which city in America has begun painting its streets white in order to lower temperatures? Is it the city of Phoenix, AZ? Is it Austin, TX? Is it Kansas City, MO, or perhaps Los Angeles, CA?

The answer is, among those cities, Los Angeles, CA. You may have seen this in the news. After a heat wave and recordbreaking temperatures, Mayor Eric Garcetti announced plans to cut the average temperature in L.A. by 3 degrees Fahrenheit over the next two decades.

One of the keys to doing this is to coat the city's roads in something called CoolSeal, which is a light-colored paint. Originally, it was a paint that was developed by engineers for military air bases so as to keep spy planes cool while they were resting on the tarmac. CoolSeal keeps streets and parking lots 10 degrees cooler than does black asphalt.

This is an interesting innovation, and I am sure the work L.A. does will help create information for other cities because cities are heat islands. Because of the asphalt, they are often much hotter than the surrounding countryside.

OK. Question No. 3. In which State do 31 communities face an imminent threat of destruction from climate disruption? Is it 31 communities in Utah or in Michigan or in Alaska or in New Hampshire?

The correct answer is Alaska. Alaska is experiencing a tremendous increase in the vulnerability of towns, which is the result of melting ice sheets; therefore, the storms closer approach. There are higher seas and more violent storms so we are seeing a real assault on those ocean communities. For one community of 600 people, it is estimated it would cost about \$180 million to relocate all of the residents.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration is moving to dismantle climate adaption programs, like the Denali Commission, which have provided Federal assistance to safeguard or relocate communities that are at risk from rising sea levels, storms, and disappearing sea ice.

This takes us to question No. 4. Of the following statements, which statement is not true; that is, which of these four statements is false? Is it that July 2017 was the second hottest month on record? Is the false statement that only one country is not signed on to the Paris climate agreement? Is it statement C, that climate disruption played no part in the devastation of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma? Is it statement D, that the United States is now producing 43 times as much solar energy as it did in 2007?

Three statements are true, and one is false. The false statement is statement C. It is, in fact, July 2017 that was the second hottest month on record. In fact, we had a recent period during which each month was the hottest month on record in the calendar year. That extended for about 16 months in a row not so long ago.

Then, indeed, only one country is not signed on to the Paris climate agreement. That country is Syria, which is in the grip of a ferocious civil war. Nicaragua had not signed on, but it has

signed on now. The United States has withdrawn or expressed its intention to withdraw, but it will not actually go off the Paris accord until the year 2020. So there is just one country, and that is also true.

It is true that solar power has increased 43 times in a 7-year period. We certainly know climate disruption does not cause hurricanes, but we also know the hotter temperature of the ocean causes the hurricanes we have to be much more powerful and much more destructive.

In the days leading up to Harvey, the sea surface temperatures in Texas were 3 to 7 degrees Fahrenheit above average. We saw this same phenomenon when Hurricane Sandy struck the Atlantic coast, where temperatures were 5 degrees or more above average.

Let's turn to question No. 5. Some scientists say we need to invent a device to pull carbon out of the air. Which of the following would accomplish that task? Would it be permafrost, wind turbines, glaciers, or trees? We do not think of any of these as an invention by humankind, but one of these processes that exists currently in nature does have a big impact in pulling carbon out of the air.

The answer is D, trees. Of course, that is a process we see during which, every year, the carbon dioxide level in the air surges when the leaves come off the trees and then decreases in the spring when the leaves are on the trees because they start pulling more carbon dioxide out of the air. So we need a lot more force in order to reduce carbon pollution.

The challenge is, worldwide, we are not adding to our forests. We are, in fact, losing our forests. In 2015, we lost about 47 percent more forested land than we did in 2001. The rate of deforestation is actually increasing so we need to be doing the reverse. We need to be ending deforestation and adding forests. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

In 2015, we lost about 49 million acres of forest around the world. We lost it because of wildfires, because of logging, and because of expanding agriculture. That is about the size of Nebraska. Picture it. In a single year, we lost forests that were the size of Nebraska. That is bad news in the fight against climate disruption because deforestation accounts for more than 10 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions, not to mention that forests play an incredibly important role in supporting diversified ecological systems around the globe.

So there we have it—this week's episode 5 of the Senate Climate Disruption Quiz. These are questions ripped right from the headlines. The facts on the ground are changing rapidly as the pace of climate disruption increases. This is the single biggest test facing humankind. It is a test that calls on every one of us to respond.

It is simply a fact that the devastation we have witnessed recently in

Houston, TX, is far more dramatic because of climate disruption and carbon pollution. It is simply a fact that the devastation we just witnessed in Florida is far worse than the disruption and the devastation that would have occurred otherwise. That is why we all need to keep working to tackle this challenge. The United States should be in the lead in taking on the seminal challenge of humankind in our generation.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

HEALTHCARE

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise in strong opposition to the Republican healthcare bill known as Graham-Cassidy. You would expect that Republicans' fourth attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act would be better than the previous three. In fact, the opposite is true. This bill is the worst of the four bills.

This is especially personal for me because the bill hurts California more than any other State. Before I get to this attack on my home State, I would like to list just a few of the many ways this bill harms millions of Americans and puts countless lives at risk.

This bill boots at least 32 million Americans off healthcare. There is no sugarcoating it; Graham-Cassidy cuts health insurance subsidies and slashes Medicaid funding. That will mean fewer people with healthcare, plain and simple.

The bill ends guaranteed protections for those with preexisting conditions. Anyone who says otherwise is not telling the truth. This bill says that States can allow insurance companies to charge those with preexisting conditions whatever they want. That means an end to guaranteed coverage because people with health conditions would be charged so much they wouldn't be able to afford coverage. Arguments to the contrary are just wrong.

This bill not only eliminates the Medicaid expansion, it ends Medicaid as we have known it since 1965. The Medicaid expansion in the Affordable Care Act has meant 15 million more vulnerable Americans have gained insurance. With those funds gone, they lose coverage. By radically changing traditional Medicaid, States would have to either cover hundreds of billions in additional costs or kick people off Medicaid. Again, fewer people with coverage, more lives at risk—these are facts, and they are indisputable.

This bill is also devastating for women's health. It ends the guarantee that

maternity care, contraception, and other critical services women need will be covered and bars women on Medicaid from accessing Planned Parenthood, which is the primary healthcare provider for millions of American women. We hear so much from the other side about the importance of being able to choose your doctor. This bill says that, if you have chosen a doctor at Planned Parenthood, too bad. It doesn't matter how much you like that doctor; you need to find someone else.

The bill also takes us back to the days of junk plans, when you could faithfully pay your premium and then discover you weren't covered when you got sick. The Affordable Care Act required all insurance companies to cover essential health benefits like cancer treatment, maternity care, prescriptions, and mental health. Graham-Cassidy says States can waive that protection.

Those items I described affect all Americans, but as I said, this bill is also a direct attack on California and other Democratic States. When the Supreme Court ruled that the Affordable Care Act couldn't require States to expand Medicaid to cover more families, some Republican States used that as a way to attack President Obama's legacy. Never mind that they were risking their own constituents' lives, it was a political win for them.

Now, Graham-Cassidy proposes taking Federal funds away from those States that did expand Medicaid and give it to those that refused. In California alone, 4 million have health insurance today because my State decided to accept the Federal Government's 90 percent contribution for a small 10 percent buy-in. Graham-Cassidy would end that, pulling the rug out from under those Californians. To say this is unconscionable is an understatement.

What is worse, the bill's authors openly admit this is their strategy—to redirect money from States like California and New York to Republican States. Senator CASSIDY said he is just trying to create "parity," but the reason there isn't parity is because Republican Governors and legislatures chose to put politics over people's health. States can choose at any time to opt-in and receive the 90 percent match for Medicaid expansion. Candidly, it is a revolting way to get a bill passed.

The one part of this bill that is the same as past versions is the dire cuts to Medicaid. This needs to be repeated: The only thing congressional Republicans have agreed on throughout this entire process is that children, pregnant women, people with disabilities, and seniors in nursing homes get too much healthcare.

For any of my colleagues who don't realize the full extent of what Medicaid does for this country, allow me to explain. Gutting Medicaid would devastate care for children, particularly those with disabilities and complex healthcare needs. If anything in Wash-

ington were untouchable, I would think it would be providing healthcare to sick children, but apparently not.

Each Republican healthcare bill in the House and Senate goes far beyond just repealing the Affordable Care Act. It essentially ends Medicaid as we have known it since 1965, the year President Lyndon Johnson created the program. Today, Medicaid covers 36 million children, including 5 million in California. That is nearly half of all children in this country. The program has always been a partnership between the States and the Federal Government. The Federal Government has paid a fixed share of all healthcare costs for Medicaid beneficiaries.

Republicans want to end that partnership. Their plan would place strict limits on Federal payments, with States responsible for all costs above that limit. We don't have a full CBO score of this bill, so we don't have the exact numbers, but outside estimates of the total cuts in this bill show States losing over \$4 trillion over the next two decades. Let me repeat that figure: over \$4 trillion of cuts to Medicaid and health insurance subsidies within a generation.

California alone would be required to pay \$139 billion more between 2020 and 2027, and over the next 20 years, it would cost my State \$800 billion. These cuts would be backbreaking and force many States to make extremely hard choices. If California couldn't come up with tens of billions of dollars more each year, millions of residents could lose their Medicaid coverage. California's Medicaid director said, "Nothing is safe—no population, no services."

In July, I visited UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in San Francisco. I met with three mothers—Kristin, Sally, and Nina. Their children—Maggie, Megan, and Drew—have struggled with extraordinary healthcare needs including cerebral palsy, a congenital heart defect, and VATER syndrome, which is a set of complex birth defects. If it weren't for the first-class care they received at Benioff, they wouldn't have survived.

These mothers are heroes. They have dedicated their lives to their children, doing all they can to ensure they lead full, happy lives in the face of such significant adversity. When I asked them how they and their children cope, Nina told me that you simply do your best to live the life you have.

All three of these families are middle class. They are covered by employer-sponsored private insurance, but Medicaid fills the significant gaps in coverage. It covers in-home nurses to provide around-the-clock care, as well as first-rate medical equipment—services that private insurance doesn't cover. Without in-home care, their children would have been placed in institutions to ensure access to critical around-the-clock care.

If the Senate passes a bill that guts Medicaid, mothers like these may not be able to keep their children at home.