

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, we have a problem—money. Six years ago today, the U.S. Supreme Court made the problem worse, a lot worse. Thanks to the Supreme Court, our system of elections is riddled with corruption. Money floods our political system—money that lets a handful of billionaires shape who gets into Congress and may decide who sits in the White House.

As Congress has become more beholden to billionaires and less worried about the American people, look at what has happened in Washington. Armies of lawyers and lobbyists flood the hallways of Congress and regulatory agencies, urging just a little tilt for every law and every rule—a sentence here, an exception there, and always tilted in favor of the rich and powerful. Corporate executives and government officials spin through the revolving door, making sure the interests of powerful corporations are always carefully protected. Powerful Wall Street businesses pay barely disguised bribes, offering millions of dollars to trusted employees to go to Washington for a few years to make policies that will benefit exactly those same Wall Street businesses. Corporations and trade groups fund study after study that just so happen to support the special rule or the exception that the industry is looking for.

Washington works great for a handful of wealthy individuals and powerful corporations that manipulate the system to benefit themselves. It works great for the lobbyists and the lawyers who slither around Washington day in and day out, handsomely paid to troll for special deals for those who pay them. But for everyone else, Washington is not working so well, and if we don't change that, this rigged political game will break our country.

Change is needed in many areas, but we can start with how we fund elections. In 2012, about 3.7 million Americans gave modest donations—under \$200—to President Obama and Mitt Romney. Those donations added up to \$313 million. In the same election, 32 people gave monster donations to super PACs. Thirty-two people spent slightly more on the 2012 elections than the 3.7 million people who sent modest dollar donations to their preferred Presidential candidates. When 32 people can outspend 3.7 million citizens, it is pretty obvious that democracy is in real danger.

We are headed into another Presidential election, and I speak out today

because I am genuinely alarmed for our democracy. I am genuinely alarmed because 6 years ago today the U.S. Supreme Court said that the privileged few are entitled under the Constitution to spend billions of dollars to swing elections and buy off legislators. Six years ago today the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a century of established law and in doing so unleashed a flood of secret corporate money into our political system.

The Supreme Court created a big problem, but that does not mean that anyone with any integrity must just roll over and play dead. No, it is time to fight back. Sure, the Supreme Court has a lot of power, and, yes, they have used it to do a huge amount of damage. But even under the Supreme Court ruling there is room to fight back against the complete capture of our government by the rich and powerful.

Let's start right here with three examples of what this Congress could do right now today—what this Congress could do if we had the political courage to stand up to the superwealthy few and a handful of corporations.

No. 1, pass Senator DURBIN's Fair Elections Now Act. This legislation would create public funding for congressional elections. Imagine the contributions of small donors so working families would have a louder voice and could begin to compete with the rich and powerful. This is a bipartisan solution—well, at least bipartisan outside Washington. According to a recent poll, Democrats and Republicans both agreed strongly with the idea of citizen-funded elections; 72 percent of Democrats and 62 percent of Republicans said yes.

No. 2, pass the DISCLOSE Act, Senator WHITEHOUSE's bill to force super PACs out of the shadows and make them tell where the money comes from. According to that same poll, 91 percent of Democrats and 91 percent of Republicans agree that super PACs and other special interests should have to disclose the source of their funding.

No. 3, pass the Shareholder Protection Act, Senator MENENDEZ's bill to force companies to tell their shareholders how much money they are giving to politicians and which politicians they are giving it to. This is the shareholders' money, and they have a right to know how it is spent. If they don't like how the money is being spent, they can put somebody else in charge.

Those are three things Congress could do right now, but there is even more.

No. 4, the President could finalize an Executive order requiring government contractors to disclose their political spending. Why should companies that do business with the government be allowed to give money in secret to benefit elected officials? Seventy-eight percent of Democrats and 66 percent of Republicans want to see this done.

No. 5, the SEC has the authority right now to begin to put together rules that would require opinion cor-

porations to disclose the money they spent in elections. Despite Republican efforts to try to block this rule through a rider in the recent government funding bill, legal experts agree that the agency still has all the authority it needs to prepare a disclosure rule.

The public demands action. The SEC has received more than a million comments from the people across this country urging the agency to issue this rule—88 percent of Democrats and 88 percent of Republicans. That is right, 88 percent of both sides support public disclosure of political spending.

Three former SEC Commissioners, one Republican, two Democrats, wrote a public letter to Chair Mary Jo White urging her to adopt this rule. It is time for the agency to stop making excuses and start doing its job.

No. 6, the FEC has the authority right now to require ads run by super PACs include disclosure of the main people or corporations that paid for them. If they want to run the country, then the billionaires shouldn't be allowed to hide in the shadows. Make them step out in the open where the American people can see who is calling the shots.

There is one more step we can take, a full-blown constitutional amendment, such as the one pushed forward by my colleague Senator UDALL to restore authority to Congress and to the States.

I have to say, I am reluctant to take on a constitutional amendment, but we need to defend our great democracy against those who would see it perverted into one more rigged game where the rich and the powerful always win, and that means taking every step possible, including amending the Constitution.

These are six ideas that would help bring an end to a corrupt political system; six ideas that Congress, the administration, the SEC, and the FCC could put together right now.

A seventh idea is a constitutional amendment that we could begin working on today. This Congress doesn't lack for workable ideas for how to root out the influence of money in politics. This Congress just lacks a spine to do it.

Six years ago the U.S. Supreme Court turned loose a flood of hidden money that is about to drown our democracy. We can blame the Supreme Court—heck, we should blame the Supreme Court, but that is no excuse for doing nothing.

A new Presidential election is upon us. The first votes will be cast in Iowa in just 11 days. Anyone who shrugs and claims that change is just too hard has crawled into bed with the billionaires who want to run this country like some private club. All of us were sent here to do our best to make government work—to make it work not just for those at the top but to make government work for all people, and it is time we start acting like it.

Madam President, I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION
MODERNIZATION AND HEALTH
INSURANCE CO-OPS

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, earlier today I attended two hearings. One was held by the Senate Finance Committee on Consumer Operated and Oriented Plans, or CO-OPs, created by the Affordable Care Act. The other was held by the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, where Secretary McDonald, a son of Ohio, detailed his plan to modernize the Veterans' Administration.

Both of these hearings are a strong reminder of the importance of government in supporting public health and access to health care and services. We know the Veterans' Administration, with all its problems today, has provided extraordinary health care for millions of veterans all across our country for decades. It doesn't mean we sit back and don't make very important improvements that are necessary at the VA.

When we learned that shocking wait times at the VA were delaying veterans from getting the care they have earned, we took action and passed a new law to invest in better care and provide more health care choices to veterans, but we can't simply act in times of crisis and then turn our backs on those who served in our Nation's military. It is our responsibility to make sure VA facilities in Ohio, Connecticut, the Presiding Officer's State of Iowa, and all over—it is important that these facilities across the country have what they need to provide state-of-the-art medical care for our veterans.

I have been struck by my time on the Veterans' Affairs Committee—I am the only Ohio Senator to ever sit on that committee for a full term. I am struck by how there are a whole lot of Members of Congress who are always happy to appropriate billions of dollars to send our men and women to war, but then when it comes time to take care of them when they come home, these same Members of Congress are not nearly as generous as let's say they were in sending them off to combat. That needs to change.

The same is true for health insurance CO-OPs or CO-OPs that face challenges. Twelve of these programs have failed. We can't sit back and let the remaining 11 CO-OPs meet the same fate. That is why I will continue to work with my colleagues to make sure CMS understands the importance and that they have the support and solvency they need to succeed.

When it comes to providing quality health care, the Ohio CO-OP is a success story worth telling. InHealth Mutual in Ohio covers approximately 25,000 people, 25,000 lives. It has en-

rolled individuals in each of Ohio's 88 counties. InHealth is doing some wonderful work, and it has taken it upon itself to be a major player in the community and in enhancing public health in Ohio.

One issue InHealth has chosen to highlight is health equity. InHealth is working to eliminate health disparities and is focusing on reducing barriers to care through its InHealth Cares Program.

To that end, InHealth started a faith-based initiative called Project REACH to address health disparities. Three years ago at a Martin Luther King celebration, a Martin Luther King breakfast in Cleveland, a minister told us something we perhaps already knew, but he said it so poignantly. He said: Your life expectancy is connected to your ZIP Code. Think about that. If you are born in Appalachia in Southeast Ohio or if you are born in East Cleveland versus if you are born in the more affluent suburbs of Shaker Heights or Bexley or Upper Arlington, your life expectancy can literally be a difference of 20 years. Imagine there are places in Cuyahoga County—one only 8 or 9 miles apart from the other—where a baby born has a life expectancy of literally 24 years less than a baby born in the more affluent suburb.

But one of the things these CO-OPs can do is—by involving trusted members of the faith community and focusing on issues such as infant mortality, asthma, and diabetes, InHealth is successfully utilizing key community players to strategically improve access to care in minority communities across Ohio, but despite InHealth's current success, they continue to experience significant challenges.

Earlier today, the Acting Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services testified in front of our committee about the challenges facing CO-OPs. At the hearing, many of my colleagues expressed significant concerns about the closure of the 12 CO-OPs that have pulled out of the market as well as the viability of the others that remain. I share those concerns, and I urge the Acting Administrator of CMS, Andy Slavitt, to work with Congress and the remaining CO-OPs, such as InHealth, to ensure their future viability. I commend him on his performance at this morning's hearing. I hope the committee will take the appropriate steps to confirm him so he is no longer an Acting Administrator but has the real job.

Congress and CMS must work together to find creative ways to ensure these CO-OPs that are negatively affected by the lower than expected risk corridor payments can find alternative ways to ensure financial stability.

We should work together to improve the current risk adjustment calculation, which is currently designed to favor the larger, more established health insurance carriers over new and significantly smaller health insurance plans, such as the CO-OPS, and im-

prove provider cost transparency in the market. They must work together to support the alternative ways for CO-OP small businesses like InHealth to raise capital.

CO-OPs like InHealth in Ohio are putting customer service before profits in making a positive difference in patients' health and their pocketbooks. CO-OPs boost competition, they drive down prices for customers, and because they are locally run and operated by their own members, CO-OPs are invested in providing the best possible care for the communities they serve. CO-OPs like InHealth are working. We need to make sure they have the support they need to continue providing quality, affordable local insurance to thousands of people in my State of Ohio and across the country.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Finance Committee, on the floor, and with CMS on these important issues so the existing CO-OPs—like InHealth—can continue to pursue innovative approaches to affordable comprehensive health insurance.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, let me thank my friend from Ohio for his very constructive remarks on the success of CO-OPs. We have a CO-OP in Connecticut that has been providing very good quality care at very reasonable rates. It is part of what helps make our marketplace function, and I will look forward to working with him as we try to sustain the success of CO-OPs across the country moving forward as an element of the Affordable Care Act which, as I have said many times on this floor, is working.

AUTHORIZATION FOR MILITARY
FORCE

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, today I have come to the floor to speak very briefly about a resolution that the majority leader introduced, I believe, yesterday. This is an authorization for military force that apparently purports to give the President legal authority to conduct military operations against ISIS. Before we break for the weekend, I thought it was important to come to the floor to explain very briefly to my colleagues what this resolution really is.

This resolution is a total rewrite of the war powers clause of the U.S. Constitution. Let's be clear about that. It is essentially a declaration of international martial law, a sweeping transfer of military power to the President that will allow him or her to send U.S. troops almost anywhere in the world for almost any reason with absolutely no limitations.

Article I, section 8, clause 11 of the Constitution vests in Congress the responsibility to declare war. Many of us on both sides of the aisle have been arguing for over a year that the President—right now—has exceeded his constitutional authority in continuing