

of Health. We spend tens of billions of dollars each year doing basic research, which is then used by the pharmaceutical company to develop their drugs.

Is it too much to ask them to bargain a fair price for drugs sold to Medicare so that the taxpayers get a break, and the pharmaceutical profits may go down just slightly? I don't think it is too much to ask.

We are going to have an interesting debate in the next few weeks because the Democrats think it is time that pharma be held responsible for dramatically overcharging Americans for pharmaceutical drugs that cost a fraction of its price in Canada and Europe.

The Senator from Kentucky obviously sees it another way. He thinks it is socialism. He calls it a free lunch—we want to give away a free lunch. It isn't a free lunch when you can't afford to fill your prescription the doctor gave you and you wonder if you are jeopardizing your health or your life.

Take the drug insulin. We are working on that too. Insulin wasn't discovered by Americans; it was discovered by Canadians back in the early part of the 20th century. And they decided—and what a gesture it was—that they were going to give away and surrender the patent on this discovery.

Before then, it was not atypical that people died from diabetes. After insulin, they could survive. It was a life and death drug. And the researchers who discovered it said: This shouldn't be a profitmaker; this should be something that is priced so that people can continue to live.

Well, what has happened to insulin? Over the years, the pharmaceutical companies started doing their magic, and the cost of insulin for many people is dramatically higher than they can afford. Some people actually cut the amount of insulin which they are told to take because they can't afford it.

We want to bring down the cost of this lifesaving drug to a \$35 a month maximum premium for insulin, and I think that is a reasonable amount of money.

So I believe that when it comes to the drug industry in America, it is a great sector of our economy. They have found some wonderful things, with the help of Federal research. They are making profits, as I guess every private sector company is designed to do. But it is not unreasonable for us to ask, it is not socialistic for us to ask, as American citizens, that they negotiate fair prices for all Americans. They do it for veterans. They can do it for Medicare and others.

And if Senator MCCONNELL is signaling we are in for a fight over this issue, all I have to say are three words: Bring it on. Bring it on. The American people are sick and tired of the overpricing of these drugs, and I think it is time that we have this debate. And if the Republicans want to stay on the side of pharma and say the Democrats are wrong, let's take that to the Amer-

ican people in November. I think it is a viable issue.

ABORTION

Madam President, in the weeks since the Alito-Thomas Supreme Court majority erased the constitutional right to abortion, the rightwing disinformation machine has kicked into high gear. Again and again, we hear the same empty words of reassurance from the Republican side. They claim that overturning Roe simply handed the question of abortion back to the people's representatives, back to the States—just that simple.

This is false, and they know it. The reality is overturning Roe has unleashed a healthcare crisis in this country. It has ripped a right to make essential healthcare decisions away from the people and their doctors and handed it to the politicians in individual States.

As soon as Roe was overturned by the Alito Supreme Court, nearly a dozen States outlawed abortion.

In Ohio, abortion access is so restricted that we have heard this horrible, bone-chilling story of a 10-year-old rape victim who was denied care in the State of Ohio. Ten years old, Madam President. At the age of 10, parents and grandparents are still worried about 10-year-old grandkids crossing the street. This 10-year-old victim had been raped. She was pregnant.

The State's law in Ohio only permits abortions before fetal cardiac activity is detected, which is usually at 6 weeks of gestation. At the time this 10-year-old child sought care, she was 6 weeks and 3 days pregnant. She missed the deadline. So the child was forced to flee her home State of Ohio and travel to Indiana, where she was given medical care.

And from the moment this story made headlines, what was the response from Republican politicians and the conservative media? They said it was fake news; that it is a hoax. They accused the doctor who treated the girl of just plain lying. They said that Democrats were making up these doomsday scenarios to scare the American people. The Wall Street Journal—the Wall Street Journal, Madam President—even ran an editorial calling the story “Too Good to Confirm.”

But unthinkable and sickening as it may be, the story is true. So why did Republicans go to such great lengths to discredit it? Because they refused to admit the truth. When faced with a case that shows the extreme consequences of outlawing abortion, as the Supreme Court just did weeks ago, they dismissed the facts as a lie.

Well, here is the truth. Republican anti-choice policies will force children—children who are still not old enough to cross the street on their own—to give birth. Ten years old. And Republicans are not content with simply banning all abortion. They want to prosecute the healthcare professionals who have to make the life-and-death decisions in the practice of medicine—

healthcare professionals like the one who treated this little girl from Ohio.

Just last week, Indiana's Republican attorney general declared he was going to investigate this doctor from Indiana who provided this abortion. Well, what were his grounds for investigating? He claimed that the doctor didn't properly report the abortion to State authorities. But even that isn't true. Records show the doctor followed the law exactly as it is written.

How did we reach this point? It has not even been a month since the Dobbs decision, and Republican officials are already finding ways to intimidate doctors who are providing essential care to Americans and America's children. The radical rightwing majority on the Supreme Court has given these lawmakers a green light to enact the most unreasonable, outrageous abortion bans imaginable.

And as cruel as these bans may be, they cannot change the reality that reproductive healthcare is healthcare. In some cases, an abortion can mean the difference between life and death.

The moment politicians start meddling in life-or-death health decisions, the moment we turn over these life-or-death decisions to a legislator rather than to a doctor and a patient, we are headed down a dark, dangerous, and deadly road.

Here is what is happening. Right now, there is a doctor in America, today, who is being forced to make an impossible decision: Do I risk jail time, do I risk criminal charges by providing the care that I believe my patient needs, or do I sit back and risk my patient's life and health from pregnancy complications?

What a choice. Do you want to make that as an elected official? I am not competent to make that choice. I am a lawyer—liberal arts. I didn't spend a day in medical school. When it comes to the people I care about—my family and others—I want medical professionals to make that decision, not run-of-the-mill politicians.

Last week, the Texas attorney general filed a lawsuit against President Biden's administration. What was the reason? Because the administration issued guidance making it clear that healthcare providers are legally protected when offering legally mandated life- or health-saving services in emergency situations.

Think about that. Texas would rather allow women to risk their health—even death—than allow them to seek emergency lifesaving care.

And, yesterday, the New York Times—and I commend this article to everyone—reported that miscarriage patients in Texas are being turned away by doctors. These women are being denied care because “doctors . . . worried the patients might have actually taken abortion pills that hadn't expelled the pregnancy, two situations that appear medically identical.”

One San Antonio based ob-gyn put it best when she said:

[T]he art of medicine is lost and actually has been replaced by fear.

This is the world we have entered after the fall of Roe. And it is a wake-up call for every Member of this Senate. Don't turn your eyes away from it. This is the reality of the Supreme Court decision.

Our constitutional rights should not, and cannot, differ State by State. For 50 years, this was a fundamentally constitutional guaranteed freedom. And it needs to be protected again by Federal law.

I don't think this Court is going to stop with overturning Roe. I commended to all my colleagues, there was a speech made last Thursday by Senator KAINE of Virginia. Before he was in politics, he was a civil rights lawyer. And he is a good one. And he explained the 14th Amendment and what it means if we were to take the Alito Court analysis and basis and reject the notion that the 14th Amendment defines our citizenship in so many different ways.

Justice Clarence Thomas has indicated the far right majority is coming next for the right to family birth control and contraception.

Oh, that can't be true, Senator. They aren't going to go after birth control pills—watch them; they have already announced they are underway—and marriage equality and making our decisions about the future of our families.

This Senate must act to protect marriage equality and all the fundamental human rights that are under threat by this radical Supreme Court. The question, though, when November comes around, will the American people care, or will they take a nap? Will they decide it is somebody else's problem? Well, I hope they don't because these problems are really facing all of us as Americans, whether we like it or not. We would rather not talk about this issue, but the Supreme Court gives us no choice.

Now, let's be sensible. These are medical decisions that should be made by medical professionals.

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

Madam President, 2 weeks ago, the Center for Disease Control issued an alert: There was a listeria outbreak that sent nearly 2 dozen people in 10 States to the hospital.

For those who may not know, listeria is the bacteria that causes listeriosis. It is serious. It is a life-threatening illness. In most cases, the infection causes fever, sometimes confusion, loss of balance; but in some cases, it can be deadly.

Tragically, an expectant mother from Massachusetts who contracted it lost her baby. And another person in my home State of Illinois lost her life. Her name was Mary Billman. She was from Pesotum, IL. It is a small downstate community, about 15 miles south of Champaign.

In January, she went to Florida to visit her daughter. One day, she de-

cidated to grab an ice cream cone. Harmless, right? As it turned out, no. That ice cream was contaminated. Ice cream is the most likely source of this listeria outbreak. Mary Billman was 79 years old. The listeria that she faced took her life.

This outbreak is one example of a long list of outbreaks in America, which are becoming way too common. The Food and Drug Administration is responsible for regulating 80 percent of our Nation's food supply. Nearly all of the foods we buy at the supermarket are supposed to be guaranteed as safe by the Food and Drug Administration. So when we pick up a box of cereal for the kids, a bag of lettuce, a jar of peanut butter, a pint of ice cream, we assume it has been inspected. We assume it is safe.

Here is the problem: Too often, that is not the case. The FDA is failing to uphold its most basic food safety responsibility: inspecting facilities. Over the past decade, the number of inspections it performs has fallen by nearly 60 percent—60-percent decline in inspections in the last decade. And to add insult to injury, that decline happened after Congress passed the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act—a 2011 bill, which I offered, that instructed the FDA to increase the number of inspections. They did the opposite.

If that weren't bad enough, in 2017, the HHS inspector general concluded that, even when the FDA did inspect facilities, the Agency did not always take action when it uncovered significant inspection violations. We know that story.

This summer, a bacteria known as Cronobacter contaminated infant formula, leading to nationwide shortages. The FDA was alerted to this problem 4 months before it took any action—4 months. So even when the FDA performs an inspection and identifies a threat to public health, it doesn't take timely action, not even when the problem can sicken and kill adults, children, infants. That is hard to imagine.

The FDA is adrift. And our most vulnerable people in America—children, mothers, and older Americans—are at risk.

Last week, I introduced a bill that would transfer all of FDA's food responsibilities to a new Agency outside the FDA that we hope will actually do its job. We are calling it simply the Food Safety Administration. Congresswoman ROSA DELAURO, my friend and a Representative from the State of Connecticut, has introduced the companion bill in the House. Our bill represents a clean slate for food safety in America. It would create a new Food Safety Administration that would be run by food safety experts who were focused on protecting the Nation's food supply.

If I went into detail of the responsibilities of different Federal Agencies to inspect foods, you wouldn't believe it. If you have a cheese pizza, Food and Drug Administration; put pepperoni on

the pizza, now it is the Department of Agriculture. It changes based on definitions that might have made sense sometime in the past, make no sense anymore.

On behalf of the 15 million Americans who contract a foodborne illness each year and tens of thousands who are hospitalized, it is time to stop talking about it and do something.

The FDA failed my constituent Mary Billman, along with 3,000 Americans like her who lose their lives every year to foodborne illness. Many of these deaths are preventable, but they will keep happening if we don't fix our Nation's defunct food safety system.

We say America is the wealthiest Nation in human history. We are blessed, we know, with one of the most abundant agriculture industries. And we are home to some of the best and brightest scientists in the world. So there is absolutely no excuse for allowing the FDA's food safety failures to persist. With our legislation, we can replace this broken system with one that will finally protect our families.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

INFLATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, at each of my 99 county meetings and in conversations with Iowans generally, the record cost of living is top of mind as Iowa families feel the impact of 9.1 percent inflation. They feel that on their family budgets, for sure.

Due to rampant inflation spurred by reckless government spending, consumer prices are escalating at a historic pace. Middle-class Americans are paying more for everything from gasoline, food, and shelter, to home furnishings, prescription drugs, and clothing.

Since President Biden took office January 2021, consumer prices have increased, on average, 12 percent nationally. As a result, the average Iowa household has seen its monthly living expenses increase to \$670 a month. The rising cost of transportation, energy, and food has hit household budgets particularly hard.

Since January 2021, Americans on average are paying an extra \$206 a month on energy, \$334 a month on transportation and gas, and an additional \$76 a month for food. It is no wonder inflation is the No. 1 concern that I hear about as I tour Iowa's 99 counties.

Rising wages have helped some Iowans manage the rising cost of living. However, for most, rising prices have far outpaced the wage gains. While trying to make up an extra \$600 a month is hard enough for wage earners, it is next to impossible for senior