

**SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN**  
**REMARKS ON THE FLOOR OF THE U.S. SENATE**  
**SEPTEMBER 30, 2013**

Madam President, I come to floor today in a state of disbelief.

With millions of people still out of work, with an economic recovery that is still far too fragile, with students and families being crushed by student loan debt, with millions of seniors denied their chance at one hot meal a day with Meals on Wheels and millions of little children pushed out of Head start because of a sequester, with the country hours away from a government shutdown and days away from a potential default on the nation's debt, the Republicans have decided that the single most important issue facing our nation is to change the law so that employers can deny women access birth control coverage.

In fact, letting employers decide whether women can get birth control covered on their insurance plans is so important that the Republicans are willing to shutter the government and potentially tank the economy. Over whether women can get access to birth control. In the year 2013. Not the year 1913—the year 2013.

I have a daughter and I have granddaughters. And I will never vote to let a group of backward-looking ideologues cut women's access to birth control. We have lived in that world, and we are not going back. Not ever.

This assault on birth control is just one more piece of an ongoing Republican assault on the orderly functioning of our government and the orderly functioning of our economy. In effect, the Republicans are trying to take the government and the economy hostage, threatening serious damage to both unless the President agrees to gut the Affordable Care Act.

This assault is utterly bizarre. Congress passed the Affordable Care Act to solve real, honest-to-God problems. Our health care system is broken. 48 million people in this country had no health insurance. Women couldn't get access to cancer screenings. People with diabetes were denied health insurance because of pre-existing conditions. People with cancer hit the caps on health insurance spending. And health spending in this country was growing way too fast.

So we worked hard, we compromised, we came up with a solution— a solution that will substantially improve the lives of millions of Americans – because that's the way democracy works.

It is time to end the debate about whether the Affordable Care Act should exist and whether it should be funded. Congress voted for this law. President Obama signed this law. The Supreme Court upheld this law. The President ran for reelection on this law. In fact, his opponent said he would repeal it – and his opponent lost by five million votes.

I see things like this and I wonder what alternate reality some of my colleagues are living in. So let me be very clear about what is happening in the real world: The ACA is the law of the land. Millions of people are counting on it—people who need health care coverage, people who need insurance policies that don't disappear just when they are their sickest. Women will get insurance coverage for birth control. The law is here to stay, and it will stay. Earlier today, the Senate emphasized that reality by flatly rejecting the Republican's newest ransom note, just as we did last week.

We should be having a real debate about our budget – because we have real problems to solve. Earlier this year, automatic, across-the board cuts went into effect throughout the federal government. That's the sequester. The sequester hits American families where they live. During my visits to cities and towns across Massachusetts, I've heard from families, small business owners and community development organizations – from the Berkshires to the Cape. They tell me what it is like to try to stay afloat with mindless, across the board spending cuts weighing them down.

More than a thousand employees at Westover Air Force Base and Barnes Air National Guard Base in Western Massachusetts are facing furloughs. This fall, more than two thousand Massachusetts kids couldn't get into Head Start because of cuts, and the Head Start program in Billerica will close completely at the end of this year. Federal workers across our state stand to lose as much as 30 percent of their salaries. And every one of those losses will tighten family budgets. And when families make less money, they have less to spend with local merchants and less money to pay off bills and less money to save, and less money to do all the things that keep our economy humming.

In fact, the Congressional Budget Office says that ending the sequester would add 900,000 jobs to the economy by the end of next year. Next time you think about someone you know who is looking for a job or who is working part-time but hoping to get full-time work, think about the 900,000 jobs that the sequester has destroyed.

Scientists and medical researchers in Massachusetts are also getting pounded by the sequester. They are working hard to expand our knowledge and develop new cures to devastating diseases. They are working on discoveries that will help us in ways we can't even imagine. Yet here we are, bluntly hacking away at their funding, delaying their

research and cutting off promising new work before it even starts. Not because we have to. Not because it is inevitable. But because Washington has its priorities all wrong – and it's making some truly terrible decisions.

Consider the Framingham Heart Study – it's a generations-long study of the causes of heart disease, a study that has helped create groundbreaking advancements in medical knowledge. There are people across this country who are alive today in part because of the work that began with this study. This study continues to yield extraordinary research, but it is scheduled to lose 40% of its funding. 40%. The next time you think of someone you love who has heart trouble, think about the sequester cutting one of the world premier heart research programs.

Senate Democrats have put forward alternatives that would adequately fund the government while also addressing our budget deficits. Back in March, the Senate passed a budget that would have ended the sequester. It wasn't easy, and we had to make some compromises. No one loved everything in the final bill, but we debated it and we passed it. This is what Congress is supposed to do. But after we did all that, Senate Republicans decided to filibuster the budget again and blocked us from going to work on a conference with the House on a final bill. That's just pure obstruction, plain and simple.

In July, the Senate attempted to pass the first of several appropriations bills to keep the government open and to end the sequester. We had a bipartisan transportation and housing bill that would have helped repair crumbling roads and bridges in our communities. It would have created more jobs. And it would have rolled back sequestration in these programs. But once again, Senate Republicans filibustered and blocked that bill.

Now we are just hours from the government running out of money. We haven't fixed the sequester because of all the obstruction. We haven't finished a budget because of all the obstruction. We haven't even passed a single appropriations bill because of all the obstruction.

The least we can do – the bare minimum that we can do – would be to pass a “continuing resolution” to keep the doors open and the lights on. We could ensure that over a million federal workers aren't simply sent home for no reason. We could avoid a government shutdown.

But the Republicans have refused to do even that. They have continued to threaten to shutter the government unless the President agrees to gut the Affordable Care Act.

The Senate rejected that position – twice – yet the Republican response has been to continue to threaten to shut the government down.

These threats may continue, but they are not working. And they will never work. Because this is democracy. And in a democracy, hostage tactics are the last resort for those who can't otherwise win their fights through elections, can't win their fights in Congress, can't win their fights for the Presidency, and can't win their fights in the Courts. For this right-wing minority, hostage-taking is all they have left – a last gasp of those who cannot cope with the realities of our democracy.

The time has come for those legislators who cannot cope with the reality of our democracy to get out of the way so that those of us in both parties who understand that the American people sent us here to work for them can get back to working on solving real problems faced by the American people.

We have real work to do, and that's what we should be doing.

Thank you Mr. President.