

Update: 09/22/17 11:09:33 AM ...

HuffingtonPost and Politico websites are advising that John McCain has just come out against the Repeal & Replace bill, effectively killing it again.

## TWO IS THE MAGICAL NUMBER ...

When it comes to memorable weeks, this one will rank right up there for both weather watchers and bombast collectors. Two hurricanes that devastated the Caribbean and two events that blew through Washington were the cause of misery and grief down south as well as hyperbole and hutzpah in the nation's capital.

Two devastating hurricanes wiped out most infrastructure on the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and other areas, while a major earthquake hit Mexico City. Two potentially devastating events blew through Washington at the same time.

For weather watchers, it was binge watching time. For political junkies, it was a neverending parade of bluster, prevarication, and hubris.

I won't dwell on the natural disasters, except to point out that multiple tens-of-billions of dollars of taxpayer aid will be required to restore Puerto Rico and the V.I., if indeed it can ever be done. Mexico City will eventually recover, but it will also take time.

The potential disasters in Washington have the capacity to cause even more damage and cost lives that could have been saved.

The twin schoolyard bullies exchanging taunts across the ether bring us close to a nuclear confrontation that rivals that of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. I never thought I would see the day when international diplomacy was reduced to one-hundred-thirty-five characters or less, but there we are. I only hope that cooler heads can keep the president's 'small hands' away from the Twitter keyboard, but it may be a forlorn hope. A possible outcome is the first non-test nuclear explosion since 1945, hopefully not over a populated area of our country. It goes without saying that if it comes close to U.S. territory, that North Korea will be reduced to radioactive glass, and parts of South Korea will look like the no-mans-land between the trenches of World War One.

Here at home, we were treated to the spectacle of another war of words, this time over the latest zombie incarnation of 'Obamacare Repeal and Replace.' In the halls of Congress, we were treated to the sight of grown men who should know better, turning themselves into

verbal pretzels trying to justify the latest version of health care reform. I am an inveterate addict to the news channels and CSPAN, and I can't recall as much hyperbole and misinformation since Nixon's Watergate, Clinton's impeachment, or the Army-McCarthy hearings. It's been a week for watching the manure manifest.

It's illuminating to observe that a late-night TV host/comedian presents a truer version of what the new/old health care bill will do than those in Congress that sponsored and support it can. That fact by itself should strike dread into the heart of any politician worthy of the title (there aren't many.) And the arm-twisting and state-pot-sweetening for holdout Senators is enough to make Lyndon Johnson envious.

Johnson was at least discreet about exerting pressure on wavering politicians, whereas the forces exerted on those non-cooperating Republican senators is played out on the news channels daily, if not hourly. And the stakes for the citizens of the United States couldn't be higher.

OK, so technically the new legislation preserves the clause requiring insurance companies to cover people with pre-existing conditions. Those words are in there. But in other sections, states are allowed to get waivers for the insurance companies to charge almost any amount to provide that coverage, and we all know that those particular premiums will skyrocket.

The new law will also allow states to opt out of requiring a lot of mandated services, such as pre-natal, annual physical, and a host of preventive care provisions that have reduced emergency room care by significant amounts.

Oh, and did I mention that most states would lose billions of dollars in Medicaid support over a decade, causing them to reduce services and almost guaranteeing that they will require the waivers to almost all requirements of the legislation. Result: fewer people insured; many millions losing coverage; and those that retain it will have higher premiums, skimpier coverage and higher deductibles.

But this is what will "save the medical insurance markets" and improve health care for all Americans by reducing premiums and making it more affordable. Yeah, right. In reality, almost all organizations and corporations associated with the health care industry are rabidly against this bill, and the patient-care advocates are wringing their hands and turning livid at the consequences if this bill passes.

What is so baffling about the support for this bill is the tunnel-vision of Congress that appears hell-bent on fulfilling a campaign promise that is so injurious to the citizenry that they supposedly

represent.

So where does this single-mindedness come from?

The right-wing political structure is funded by those that have money, and they want their taxes cut. It is only through massive cuts to the health care dollars that the losses incurred by the tax cuts to the richest can be justified. Once again, money talks, and it's got the ear of the government.

We can only hope that cooler heads prevail and we get modifications to the present system, instead of the chaos in the health care system that would come about if this passes.

It's been a week to remember.