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[00:00:28] **Speaker 1** The federal government shutdown extends into next week, with the U.S. Senate adjourning until Tuesday after repeated failed votes to reopen. We're joined now by Wisconsin Democratic U. S. Senator Tammy Baldwin. And Senator, thanks very much for being here. Thanks for having me. What is your message to Wisconsinites in the face of what looks like congressional dysfunction as the shutdown grinds on?

[00:00:54] **Speaker 2** Look, nobody wants a shutdown and I have voted seven times now to reopen the government and lower health care costs for Wisconsinites. And my constituents have been telling me loudly and clearly they are terrified about premium increases that they see. In the near future. It'll be just a couple weeks before Wisconsinites get those dreaded letters in the mail telling them what their premiums will be next year. And without an extension of the Affordable Care Act premium tax credits, we are likely to see people's premiums double, triple, even quadruple. In those states that have already released the premiums for next year, quadrupling is not unusual at all. And it is frightening for Wisconsinites. And there's no reason why we cannot reopen the government and bring down costs. But my Republican colleagues and President Trump refuse to sit down and negotiate with us. Even though several of my Republican colleagues very much want to fix this Affordable Care Act tax credit issue. And I would lastly say this bill that we, you know, Trump's signature big ugly bill that we debated last summer, slashes a trillion dollars out of Medicaid, another healthcare program, Badger Care in Wisconsin, but it was predominantly a tax measure. And what that tax measure did was send tax breaks to big corporations and multimillionaires. And what it didn't do was extend a tax break to working Wisconsinites to help them afford their healthcare premiums. This is an emergency. It's imminent and we need to act now.

[00:02:42] **Speaker 1** Why not vote yes on the continuing resolution to fund the government and then negotiate?

[00:02:50] **Speaker 2** There is no promise for a conversation, a sort of a wink and a nod that, oh, we'll bring that up later, that is going to help our Wisconsinites who are gonna get these letters in a couple of weeks. We need to create certainty in, and replace Trump's chaos in the healthcare arena and other arenas with a vote to extend those tax credits now. Listen. We are seeing people get their premium notices right now across the country. We have about five million Americans who are estimated to not be able to afford the premiums next year if we do not act. We must act on behalf of tens of thousands of Wisconsinites and millions of Americans. And it's really critical that we not just. I promise some conversation in the future. That is not sufficient for the people who've been pleading with me. Keep on fighting.

[00:03:56] **Speaker 1** To lower costs. It was clear that the ACA enhanced credits were going to expire. They went into effect during COVID and were later extended under the Inflation Reduction Act. Why are they still needed?

[00:04:11] **Speaker 2** The health care system is a mess, I will give you that. And we see costs going up. It would be a catastrophe if millions of people lose their health care. And Trump ran on lowering costs for the American people. That is why he was elected. And every action he has taken seems to increase costs, whether that's tariffs that are harming our farmers and our consumers, or whether that is his big, ugly bill, which are raising costs across the board, but especially in the healthcare arena. We should have included those tax, the extension of the affordable care tax credit in the big. Ugly bill. Maybe we could have then called it a big, beautiful bill. But instead, Republicans and Trump prioritized tax cuts for the very wealthiest billionaires, profitable corporations. But when it came to a working family tax credit to help people afford their health care, no, they couldn't put that in the big, ugly bill."

[00:05:19] **Speaker 1** You say that there's an easy way out and you've been working on a bipartisan solution. What is the easy way and what kind of traction are you getting on a bi-partisan solution?

[00:05:30] **Speaker 2** Look, we need to reopen the government and we need to get a commitment to extend the Affordable Care Act. And there's several ways to do that. The Affordable Care Tax credits expire at the end of this year. My idea, and I've worked with several colleagues on this, would be to say that if we don't act on a longer term extension, that the default position would be that the Affordable Care Act tax credits are extended by a calendar year. But putting pressure on Congress to talk about some reforms in that system, if we want, I think that's fair game. The other thing we have to get back to is letting Congress appropriate dollars. That is the role. It's the role of Congress as a checks and balance to pass laws and to appropriate dollars for the federal government. These continuing resolutions are allowing President Trump to run roughshod. Since he has been president, he's done layoffs, he has held federal funds, he canceled grants. Basically conducted a government of chaos. And we need to go back to something that people can plan based on, which is Congress doing its job. And my Republican colleagues have to stop folding to Trump's threats and stand up and do their jobs as duly elected members of Congress.

[00:06:58] **Speaker 1** I know that the president has been talking about terminating federal employees, apparently using the shutdown as a predicate. Senator Johnson told us last week that when your company goes bankrupt, unfortunately, he said people lose their jobs and they have to go and find employment elsewhere. He further said he doesn't see why public sector employees should be immune to what we all have to experience in the private sector. What's your response to that?

[00:07:26] **Speaker 2** First of all, President Trump has been firing federal employees and withholding federal dollars and pulling federal grants since day one of his presidency. Tens of thousands of federal employees have lost their jobs because we've been under a continuing resolution. And so this is a scare tactic on Trump's part, but he's been doing it since day of his second presidency. And as to layoffs and whatnot in the private sector and the public sector. Look, we've gone through planful restructuring, where we've had reductions in forces before. I held a roundtable earlier this year with employees at the VA, and they all recall a Clinton-era restructurng, where it was planful and they realized where they needed to cut. That's not what this administration has been doing. When Trump ordered 80,000 people to be fired at the V.A., That wasn't a planful reduction in force. That was scattershot. It was chaos. And we owe more to our veterans than something like that.

[00:08:37] **Speaker 1** As to the current shutdown, how do you see this ending?

[00:08:41] **Speaker 2** Look, I know that there are Republicans who are terrified about what's going to happen to their constituents, especially as these premium notices come to people's mailboxes across the country. They want to find a solution to this, but they're afraid to fold to Trump's orders to just keep, you know, hold off negotiations to the future. I think The answer is so clear. Let us reopen the government, let us extend the Affordable Care Act tax credits, and then let's pass our bills and have Congress do its job and fund the government. Not through these continuing resolutions for a week or two or a month or two, but through our regular appropriations process. That's what Congress needs.

[00:09:36] **Speaker 1** Needs to do. Senator Tammy Baldwin, thanks very much. Thank you for having me. Thank you. All right. Take care. That was excellent. Have a good weekend. Thank you.