

the worst shape we have seen it since the Great Depression when President Obama was sworn into office. It was not, as he said, his choice to face that kind of an issue or challenge, but it was the reality of what he faced. He did the right thing. He said: I am not going to stand idly by and observe this economy continue to decline, with more and more people facing unemployment, businesses failing, and people losing their savings. I am going to step up and try to create jobs, save and create jobs here in America so that we do not see more people in the unemployment lines.

I supported that. Luckily, three Republican Senators at the time joined us; otherwise, we could not have passed it. So we had a bipartisan vote supporting President Obama's recovery and reinvestment package. Senator MCCONNELL, the Republican leader, opposed it. He came to the floor today to say that we wasted our money on this stimulus package and that we should be very skeptical of these things. The fact is, the Republicans in the Senate had nothing to offer as an alternative. Their alternative was to stand idly by and watch the economy continue to descend, continue to deteriorate, and maybe with a little prayer and hope that it would turn around. That is not good enough.

President Obama said: Let's first, in this stimulus package, take at least 40 percent of all of the funds I am asking for and give it back to Americans in tax breaks for working families. Families need a helping hand, the President said. I voted for that. I think that was sensible. The President made that decision. Senator MCCONNELL thinks that is wasteful, to give tax breaks to working families—at least he said it was wasted. I do not believe it is wasteful. It is a good thing to do to try to revitalize the country.

The President said: Let's invest in what will pay off for a long time to come. Let's put money into infrastructure, let's build that which will serve our economy and serve America, and let's create good-paying jobs to do it. I thought that was sensible.

The President said: Let's look to the next generation of needs in America. Let's make sure we are investing in energy projects which will pay back in years to come and lessen our dependence on foreign energy sources—another good investment from where I am sitting.

He also said: Give a helping hand to those unemployed, a little extra money for them each month to get by. It was not a lot, but for many families it made a difference.

He also said: Give the unemployed a helping hand so they can keep their health insurance. If you lose a job, you lose your health insurance. Think about that if you are trying to raise a family. The President said: Let's try to reduce the premiums unemployed people will pay.

Now Senator MCCONNELL comes to the floor and said this was a waste of

time and a waste of money for us to make that kind of investment in America. I believe the President did the right thing. I would commend to Senator MCCONNELL, the Republican leader, the latest Pew Poll, which shows that when Americans were asked if America's economy is on the right track or wrong track, they have come in with the highest number—53 percent on the right track, 39 percent on the wrong track—we have seen in months. There is a feeling that we still have a long way to go. There are still too many people unemployed, too many businesses failing. But at least we are on the right track toward recovery. It may take some time. Nobody predicted this would be fast or easy. But the President showed leadership, inheriting a bad economy and showing leadership to deal with it.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. DURBIN. The major thrust of the remarks of the Senate Republican leader, day after day, has been in opposition to health care reform. I will tell you that I think the Republican leader is out of step with America. America understands we need to do something about our health care system. We are spending twice as much per person for health care in America as any nation on Earth—twice as much—and the medical outcomes, unfortunately, do not reflect that kind of major investment. In other words, we are wasting money in our current health care system.

That has to change. So what we need to do is preserve those things in our health care system today that are good and fix the things that are broken, and that is what the President has challenged us to do. This is not something new. This challenge has been waiting for 15 years since former President Clinton tackled it and, unfortunately, could not pass it. We have seen our health care costs in America continue to skyrocket and our costs for health insurance following in track. Now we have to do something about it.

Time and again, the Senator from Kentucky comes to the floor and says: We are rushing into this. I would just say to him that in the year 2008 the Senate Finance Committee, under Chairman MAX BAUCUS, held 10 hearings on health reform and a day-long bipartisan summit with the Finance Committee's ranking member, Republican CHUCK GRASSLEY. This year, the Finance Committee has held two reform-related hearings, three roundtables, three walk-throughs with policy options, and a number of closed-door sessions to discuss all of the issues on a bipartisan basis. The HELP Committee, which is another committee of the Senate also considering health care reform, has held 14 bipartisan roundtables, 13 committee hearings, and 20 walk-throughs. Democrats are not rushing this through. We have taken this up in an orderly way, trying to

analyze one of the most significant challenges ever facing Congress.

Time and again, Senator MCCONNELL has also come to the floor and argued that Americans should be afraid of change, be afraid, be very afraid. He argued before be afraid of closing Guantanamo; now he is saying be afraid of health care reform. This is not a fearful nation. We are a nation which accepts challenges and does our best to try to find solutions. We are a good and caring nation of people who want to make certain that, at end of the day, we reduce the cost of health care for everyone, bringing it more in line with efficiency and effective medical care, and we also pick up the 50 million Americans who have no health insurance and give them protection, bring them under the umbrella of protection. We should not be afraid of that challenge. Why would we be afraid? We know if we don't tackle it, it will continue to cost us more and more money.

One of the things the Senator from Kentucky says repeatedly, which is just plain wrong, is that under the proposals coming before the Senate, the government can take away health insurance people have today. I am sorry the Senator is not on the floor. I am sure some Members of his staff will alert him to the fact. I would like to read from the language from the HELP Committee bill which is presently being considered. This language makes it abundantly clear,—in fact, says directly—that we can keep our health care plans, that they would not be taken away. That is something most Americans want to have the benefit of. Let me read from the HELP Committee bill that will be considered by the Senate:

Nothing in this Act or an amendment made to this Act shall be construed to require that an individual terminate coverage under a group health plan or health insurance coverage in which such individual was enrolled prior to the date of enactment of this title.

That is what it says. If one likes their health insurance today, nothing we do in health care reform will take that away from them. It is expressly stated. Time and again, Senator MCCONNELL comes to the floor and says the opposite: Government is going to take away your health insurance. The clear language of the bill says: No, that is not our intention. That is not what we are going to do.

I am also concerned when I listen to the Senator from Kentucky talk about government-run health care. He says it in negative terms, as if the government's involvement in health insurance and medical care is inherently wrong or misguided or ineffective. Here are the realities: 45 million Americans out of 300 million currently are covered by Medicare. Does the Senator from Kentucky want to eliminate Medicare, a government-run health care plan? I am waiting for him to say that. He has never said it. Another 60 million Americans are under Medicaid, which provides health insurance for the poorest

among us and those who are disabled. So 105 million Americans today have either Medicare or Medicaid. That is a third of America being covered by government-run health care. That is a reality. Most Americans understand there are very positive things to be said for those plans. Would we do without Medicare; would we abolish it? I certainly wouldn't be part of that. In over 40 years, Medicare has brought peace of mind, dignity, and great medical care to millions of seniors across America. I wouldn't want to see that go away. I think it is a program that has served us well.

A question was asked recently by CNN: In general, would you favor or oppose a program that would increase the Federal Government's influence over the country's health care system in an attempt to lower costs and provide health care coverage to more Americans? The numbers that came back on May 15, by CNN: 69 percent of the American people favor that statement, favor more government involvement in health care to reduce cost and expand coverage. Only 29 percent oppose. The position argued by the Republican leader does not reflect America's feelings about health care.

If Senator McCONNELL feels the current health care system is fine and we should not work to change it, he does not, I am afraid, reflect the feelings of most Americans. We can do better. We need to do better on a bipartisan basis. We need cooperation on the Republican side of the aisle in a bipartisan effort to find real solutions, compromise that would not compromise the values of our American health care system but give people a health care program that would not be taken away from them by some health insurance company bureaucrat, something the family can afford, something small businesses can afford.

We can do it. We should not be afraid. America has tackled bigger challenges in the past.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Delaware.

HONORING JOHN GRANVILLE

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I rise once again to speak about the vital role our Federal employees play in keeping America safe, prosperous, and free.

Just days ago, on the Fourth of July, we celebrated the 233rd anniversary of our independence. For 233 years, ordinary Americans have chosen to give their energy, their time, and their talents in service to our government. Many have given their lives.

All Federal employees, as I have said previously, are bound together by a shared sense of duty and willingness to sacrifice.

When the Founders added their signatures to the Declaration of Independence, they did so with faith in their fellow Americans—that the 56 names

inked on that parchment were joined in spirit by millions of others in their own day and for generations to come.

They knew that building a nation requires more than a handful of men.

It entails the active participation of citizens from all walks of life.

This is why, a decade later, when the Framers assembled in Philadelphia to draft our Constitution, they did so with an expectation that regular citizens would be the form and substance of our government.

Indeed, they knew firsthand the value of service above self. This virtue would lead countless Americans who had fought for freedom to become the first generation of Federal employees.

The Founders and Framers had good cause to predict such participation among citizens beyond their appointed role as electors and jurors. The classical history and writings that influenced them are filled with praise for the values of duty and sacrifice that inspire public service.

Many educated Americans in 1776 were familiar with the story of Horatius the Roman.

When the armies of a tyrant approached the walls of Rome, the citizens of its infant republic were called to arms.

Horatius ran across the last bridge spanning the Tiber River where he alone held off the enemy as his compatriots destroyed the bridge behind him. With this personal act of courage, he prevented the capture of Rome.

Horatius was not a professional soldier. He was neither an elected leader nor a man of high birth.

But he defended with pride that title of honor greater than any other—citizen. He gave his life so that others could remain free.

His act is an example of the kind of sacrifices that ordinary citizens are willing to make when they know freedom is in jeopardy.

Americans looked to classical figures like Horatius in 1776, when their own liberty was uncertain.

It is this common willingness to risk safety and personal gain that sets apart a commonwealth of citizens from a nation of subjects.

It is these same qualities that make our Federal employees so worthy of praise.

On the Fourth of July, I thought about ordinary Americans who choose to serve their country in often perilous situations. Many of them risk harm while defending the liberty and values that infuse our citizenship with meaning.

As I have said before, our Federal employees exemplify the American value of service above self.

Throughout our history, Federal employees have traveled to dangerous corners of the globe, in order to represent the American people abroad, promote peaceful international cooperation, and provide aid to those in need.

John Granville was one of those who felt called to serve his country, even if

it meant traveling to places where his own safety was uncertain.

A native of Orchard Park, NY, near Buffalo, John studied at Fordham and Clark Universities before joining the Peace Corps. His service in the Corps took him to Cameroon, in West Africa, from 1997 to 1999.

While there, he applied for and received a Fulbright fellowship to continue living in that country and conduct research on its society and development.

John, committed to serving his country and helping others, then joined the Foreign Service.

He worked for the U.S. Agency for International Development—or USAID—in Kenya before heading to Sudan in 2005.

It was a dangerous assignment. That year, the Sudanese Government signed a cease-fire to end a long civil war in that country's south. John's assignment was to distribute 75,000 radios to rural villagers.

These radios could be powered by the Sun or by handcrank.

With democratic elections approaching, these radios would give the local Sudanese access to uncensored international news broadcasts.

As a former member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, I can attest to the importance of providing access to free and uncensored news. It is a vital part of developing democratic culture and press freedom. It also promotes hope and understanding, which help deter the spread of extremist views.

John worked with a dedicated team of USAID officials to distribute these radios and other aid to rural south Sudanese. One of his coworkers later said that John was "the glue" that held their group together and that he kept up their spirits throughout the mission.

On New Year's Day, 2008, John was gunned down by four militants who targeted his car for its diplomatic plates. He was only 33 years old.

His loved ones back home remembered him as an "unselfish humanitarian," a "consummate professional," and someone who "worked with energy and imagination." John was an active member of the St. John Vianney Church community, and he was a mentor who inspired others to follow in his footsteps by helping those in need.

John Granville believed in the importance of service as part of citizenship.

He crossed the ocean and stood on the other side, like the Roman Horatius at the far end of the bridge, carrying out the people's work and risking his own safety in service to his Nation.

He had told his mother on several occasions that despite the danger of his work, he would not want to be doing anything else.

There are thousands of Foreign Service officers, USAID workers, and journalists and employees with the Broadcasting Board of Governors all over the globe.