

don't stay there. They leave and one remains to light the hole. So Carl Myers, who was working with my dad, went to the next level, as a matter of fact, and waited until the holes were lit, and then my dad would come up and meet him and the holes would go off.

What happened was that one of the pieces of fuse was defective, and it set off one of the holes prematurely. It blew my dad's light out and blew one of the soles off his shoe. He was hurt and in a state of shock. What the miners did in those days, in a shaft, is they would have a sinking ladder about 10 feet long and they would take it up before the holes went off and then they would climb out on that ladder. My dad, even though he was hurt, knew he had to get out of that mine because he knew there were six other holes burning. They were covered with muck. He had to get out of there, so he put the ladder down and tried to climb out, but it kept falling over. His mind wasn't working well and he couldn't understand why that was, but the blast had blown one of the legs off the ladder, so it kept tipping over.

The man that was on the next level, knowing how many holes had been drilled and knowing only one had gone off and that there were six more to go, in spite of that, came down and helped carry my dad, who was much bigger than he was, out of that mine. He got a medal for heroism, and the incident was written up by the great journalist Lowell Thomas.

I can remember as a boy my mother still picking rocks out of my dad's back as a result of that blast. In a book I wrote about Searchlight, I talk about a number of the deaths in the mines at Searchlight. My dad worked quite a bit at Blossom, and the dad of one of my friends I grew up with was killed in that mine. My dad carried him out of that hole. So I have some knowledge about how people feel when these mining accidents occur.

As I said, this tragedy brought back a lot of memories, and I extend my condolences to all the people of West Virginia, through Governor Manchin, Senator BYRD, and Senator ROCKEFELLER. I sympathize with the people of West Virginia for their loss.

I also extend my condolences to the people of Poland. That plane carried 96 souls—parents, husbands, wives, and friends. It carried that nation's President, its First Lady, its Deputy Foreign Minister, lawmakers, their military chief of staff, and so many other military and civilian leaders. The tragic loss is unthinkable, and America grieves alongside our friends in Poland, especially when you understand where they were going and why they were going there—20,000 Poles had been killed by the Russians even before war on Germany was declared by us.

EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION TO CHAPLAIN BLACK

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish to welcome back my colleagues. I know each of us cherishes the time we get to spend at home and the face-to-face conversations we have with our neighbors and constituents.

Prior to beginning my remarks, because he is in the Chamber, I wish to extend my appreciation to our Chaplain, Admiral Black. He has been so concerned about my family as a result of the accident that occurred in the Presiding Officer's State. He has communicated with my wife personally, he has prayed for her personally and publicly and in different groups, and it just indicates what a family we are in the Senate. I personally appreciate the thoughts and more than one personal conversation with Chaplain Black about Landra.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last December, just minutes before the Senate passed the health care reform bill that President Obama signed into law last month, my friend, the Republican leader, predicted we would get an earful when we got home, and he was right. Everywhere I went in Nevada, from the two big cities of Reno and Las Vegas, to Elko and Carson City and my hometown of Searchlight, Nevadans, young and old—people, in general—came up to me and said: Thank you—numerous people, without any exaggeration.

One mother told me how grateful she was she could finally cover her child's health care. Her child has juvenile diabetes. Parents such as she told me how grateful they were that they would be able to keep their kids on their insurance until they are 26 years old. Out-of-work Nevadans—and there is more than one I would like to acknowledge—explained to me how grateful they were that finally they will be able to afford their own health care while they try to find a full-time job.

Seniors, individually and in groups, told me how grateful they are now that they will not have to worry about whether they are going to have to split a pill or take a pill because the doughnut hole has been filled. Everyone—every senior citizen in America, every Social Security recipient—understands what the doughnut hole was and isn't anymore.

Many small businesses told me that because of the tax cuts this Congress passed and our President signed into law because of the health care bill this year, they will be able to afford health insurance for the first time in their lives for their employees—24,000 of those small businesses in Nevada.

These people haven't been fooled by the opposition's strategy of myths and misinformation. They aren't frightened by the campaign of fear and false cries of socialism.

I know I am not the only one who got an earful of thanks from constituents

whose lives are changing for the better because of this historic reform. I also heard one other thing everywhere I went: This law should not be repealed.

A week ago this Sunday, I returned from Salt Lake City to Las Vegas, and the front page of the Salt Lake Tribune had a story, which I will paraphrase, but basically it said that those people in Utah are no longer talking about repealing the bill; they are talking about trying to improve the bill.

It is hard for people to talk about repealing this bill which gives such immediate benefits to the American people. It is difficult to try to have someone say I would like this bill repealed because I do not agree with the \$1.3 trillion by which this legislation is going to reduce the debt of this country in the second 10 years—\$142 billion in the first 10 years.

I explained to people at home, if you have a fight in a ring, you have a referee, a referee there to be as fair as they can to make sure it is a fair fight. In this health care debate, we had such an entity in the ring with us as we battled, Democrats and Republicans. It was set up many years ago, this referee; it was called the Congressional Budget Office. It is not run by Republicans or Democrats. It is there to be fair. It is their determination this legislation over the first 10 years would save \$142 billion, the second 10 years would reduce the debt by a further \$1.3 trillion.

People all over America, and Nevadans, now have more control than ever over their health, more protection from insurance companies, and more opportunity than ever before to have a healthy life.

As it relates to the economy, Nevadans know that health reform is economic reform. It will save families money in the short run and save our country money in the long run. But they also know we have to do more. We have to make more investments today to help our economy run better tomorrow. One of the best ways to do that is by creating green jobs, and that has worked so well, jobs right here at home that can never be outsourced, jobs that strengthen our Nation's economic, environmental and national safety and security.

Boulder City is a city in Nevada. It was built because of the Boulder Dam, now Hoover Dam. It is a great and beautiful little city. It is the only city in Nevada that has a growth ordinance. But they have also been very far-sighted. I extend my appreciation to Mayor Tobler and all the city council. They have set up a zone where they are creating green jobs, and lots of green jobs. I went there. It is between Railroad Pass and Searchlight and part of it is Boulder City. It was amazing what we saw there. For acre after acre, workers, men and women in their hard hats and their orange vests, were placing 1 million solar panels in place—1 million in the desert to produce enough electricity for about 45,000 homes. It is

the largest plant of its type in the world. There may be one in Spain that may be a tiny bit bigger, but let's assume it is not. It is a huge plant. We have this going on all over Nevada as a result of the economic recovery package and tax incentives we give people to build green energy—clean energy jobs. That vast array in the middle of the desert, dotted by countless hard hats worn by people working very hard, was truly an impressive sight.

This afternoon at 5:30 we are going on to something extremely important, especially for people who have been struggling in America. We need to continue supporting projects such as, of course, the solar plant in Boulder City and continue moving toward a clean energy economy. They demand critical long-term investments and we have a long way to go. But there are additional things we can do right now this afternoon at 5:30 to help millions of hard-working Nevadans and Americans struggling to find work. These are not deadbeats; these are not bums; these are people who are out of work and have been out of work for a long time and have struggled to find a job. If we pass this emergency extension of unemployment and health benefits, we can give those unemployed families the help they need to put food on the table or go to the doctor.

Some on the other side flatly refuse to do so. To them it doesn't matter that these people lost their jobs through no fault of their own or that they are desperate to find a new full-time job and that this is an emergency, not only for our families but for our country. Many of those who oppose this extension voted to give tax breaks to rich chief executive officers who shipped American jobs overseas. Now that their constituents are trying to find jobs of their own, I hope they will consider giving them at least the short-term help they need and need critically. If Republicans continue blocking unemployment assistance, 1 million Americans will lose that lifeline by the end of this month.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

WEST VIRGINIA MINE DISASTER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, while we were in recess, the people of West Virginia experienced a very difficult mine safety experience. Our neighbors in West Virginia, like Kentucky, are big coal producers. We have had our share, in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, over the years of mining disasters, and our hearts and prayers go out to our neighbors in West Virginia as they attempt to recover from the latest tragedy in what is obviously a very dangerous profession, and that is mining of coal.

POLISH TRAGEDY

We also witnessed a great tragedy overseas, the death of the Polish President Lech Kaczynski, his wife, and so many other Polish leaders over the weekend. This is obviously a terrible tragedy for Poland and a great loss for us as well. Poland is a great friend of the United States and we send our heartfelt condolences and every expression of solidarity to the Polish people and the families of the dead at this very difficult time.

LONG-TERM FISCAL SECURITY

Turning back to home now, I want to welcome everybody back. I hope everyone had a restful and productive break. My constituents have never been shy about sharing their views on what we are doing here in Washington. These past 2 weeks were no different. To be perfectly blunt: Kentuckians are concerned about the direction of our country. They are overwhelmingly opposed to the health spending bill, what it will cost, and the process used to pass it. And more generally, Kentuckians, and Americans everywhere, are concerned about the consequences of the endless borrowing and spending here in Washington.

Americans worry that we are on the cusp or maybe even past the cusp of a debt crisis. And they are frustrated. They don't understand how lawmakers in Washington can ignore this looming disaster after just narrowly averting the last one. Americans know that this is one crisis no bailout could ever prevent. We could borrow a trillion dollars to dig the country out of a mess that was created on Wall Street, but once the government maxes out its own credit card, there is nowhere to turn—except to the citizens themselves.

So the time to act is now. The deficit this year alone is projected to be more than \$1.4 trillion. Social Security recently started paying out more than it is taking in. Interest payments alone on the national debt are approaching \$1 trillion a year. Interest rates on mortgages, student loans, and small business loans are threatening to rise. There is no reason to think the problems we are seeing in Europe won't strike here at home if we do nothing to reverse current trends.

Those who continue to use the taxpayer credit card with reckless abandon threaten not only our chances of a quick recovery and the jobs it would create but also the nation's long-term fiscal security—and a safety net that has been built up over the decades precisely for moments like this. Democrats can no longer hide behind the argument of good intentions when the results threaten our very stability as a nation.

We must get a handle on the deficit and the debt. This is the issue that will focus our attention in the weeks and months ahead. And over the coming weeks, I assure you, Republicans will continue to give our colleagues across the aisle and our President the opportunity to live up to the President's

commitment on February 13: "Now, Congress will have to pay for what it spends, just like everybody else." Americans will not tolerate another crisis of Washington's making.

SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Another issue we will be focused on, of course, is the Supreme Court. Justice Stevens' decision last week to retire from the Court gives us another opportunity to discuss the proper role of our Federal courts and our Constitution.

Last year, during the debate over Justice Sotomayor's nomination, Americans saw the Senate debate and discuss the President's "empathy" standard for judicial appointments. At the end of that debate, most Americans—and indeed Justice Sotomayor herself, along with Senators of the President's own party—rejected that standard and agreed with Republicans that judges ought to apply the law, not their own feelings and personal preferences.

We are hopeful that this time around the President will select someone with extensive real-world legal experience and a demonstrated commitment to the rule of law. That is what Americans expect from their judges, whether it is small claims court or the Supreme Court. They do not expect us to select judges based upon whose side the judge is on, as one Democrat on the Judiciary Committee once suggested.

Once the President submits his nominee, Senate Republicans will diligently review his or her record so the American people can be confident that they will be able to fulfill the judicial oath; namely, to administer "justice without respect to persons and to do right by the poor and by the rich." I am hopeful that at the end of the day, I and other Republicans will be convinced that the nominee will be able to do so.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There will now be a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Illinois.

EXPRESSING SORROW TO WEST VIRGINIA AND POLAND

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I join my colleagues in expressing my sorrow to the families of West Virginia for the coal miners who were lost in that disaster. Illinois is a coal mining State. Throughout our history we have had terrible mine disasters and the loss of