

important role to play. We recognize the need for commonsense regulations to ensure the safety of our citizens and the preservation of our resources. But it has become increasingly clear to many Americans that Democrats in Washington have lost all sense of balance when it comes to both the size and the scope of the Federal Government in Washington.

Based on the letters I get and the people I meet, there is a growing sense out there that government regulations are simply and completely out of control and that this is one of the main reasons we are in this jobs crisis. There is a growing sense the reason for this is that lawmakers and bureaucrats in Washington have completely lost touch—completely and totally lost touch—with the struggles folks outside the beltway are going through.

I saw yesterday that the Washington, DC, area now has the highest median income in the country. Washington, DC, the Nation's Capital, has the highest median income in the country. I have no doubt many of these people do good work, but the point is they are weathering this economic downturn pretty well. Not only are they making big salaries relative to the private sector, they are also holding on to their jobs. The unemployment rate for the country as a whole is 9.1 percent. For government workers it is about half that—4.7 percent.

With all due respect to my friends on the other side, it is the private sector that has been begging for mercy. It is the private sector that is being crushed by regulators in Washington. I don't think the solution to the crisis is to make the Federal Government even bigger.

When it comes to jobs, the primary role of government is to create an environment in which Americans and American businesses can grow and flourish without the heavy hand of government on their backs. We shouldn't be making it harder for people to do business and to prosper. We should be making it easier. Yet everywhere I go, from Silicon Valley to Kentucky coal mines, I hear the same thing: Get Washington off our backs. They are killing us with all these impossible demands. It is not the commonsense regulations they complain about; it is all the new burdensome, duplicative and, in some cases, impossible to comply with regulations. I have small business owners in Kentucky writing me to say they can barely get by as it is, and the EPA is harassing them with paperwork and threatening them with fines.

I mentioned a paper company the other day in Ohio that is shutting down because the EPA demanded they upgrade their boilers with a technology that doesn't even exist yet.

I know my Democratic colleagues hear these same complaints because they literally cut across party lines. One story I saw this week featured a Democratic mayor in Massachusetts telling Washington to back off.

Here is a woman who went to the President's inauguration, an Obama supporter, stood in the cold to witness it with her kids. And now she says she is losing her faith in government because the overzealous enforcement of brutal new fishing regulations is destroying jobs and forcing smaller players out of the business altogether.

Democrats hear stories such as this too, and their solution is that we should hire even more people who wake up every morning thinking about yet new ways to regulate private industry until they cry uncle. Our view is that we should actually listen to what people are asking us to do and to help them out, give them a break. It is time for government to help private sector job creators instead of looking for ways to punish them.

What we are doing is we are asking the Democrats to work with us on ways to help the private sector grow, because the fact is we are not going to get this economy going again by growing the government. It is the private sector that is ultimately going to drive this recovery.

Look, if big government were the key to economic growth, then countries such as Greece would be booming right now. If big government were the key to economic growth, Greece would be booming.

What we need to do is to focus on helping the private sector grow. I know the Democratic plan is to focus on their government jobs bill instead, to punish private sector job creators with yet another tax to subsidize even more temporary government jobs at the State level. But what I am saying is, let's put the government stimulus bills aside for a change and do something for the small business men and women in this country who are begging for mercy from their own government, right here in Washington.

There is a lot we can do. As I noted yesterday, the House has already passed three pieces of legislation this year alone, one as recently as last week, that would send an entirely different message to businesses. Every one of these bills to roll back excessive regulations by bureaucrats here in Washington got solid bipartisan support in the House of Representatives.

Last night, Senate Republicans also moved ahead on legislation that private contractors who do work for Federal, State, and local governments have been asking us to enact as a way to protect jobs. At a time when so many businesses are struggling to stay afloat—to literally stay afloat—the government shouldn't burden them even more by taking money out of businesses that they could use to invest and hire.

The best thing about this proposal is not only is it bipartisan, it is also part of the President's bill. So here is another example of something we could do for job creators that we know will actually be signed into law. And there is no reason I can think of that this

legislation shouldn't get 100 votes in the Senate—a proposal supported by the President of the United States, passed with a large bipartisan majority in the House. Why don't we pass it? It is in the President's own bill, for goodness sake.

The White House said yesterday that every part of the President's bill is equally important. If that is true, let's pass this measure. This legislation should get unanimous support. So let's vote on this and the other bipartisan jobs legislation I have mentioned and then send them to the President for an actual signature, making a law instead of making a point.

It is time we showed people who are struggling out there that we are on their side, because right now I know a lot of them are having serious doubts. It is time we do something serious about jobs. The proposal I offered last night, with the support of my Republican colleagues, supported by the President of the United States, passed by a bipartisan majority in the House, would be a good step in the right direction.

LISA WOLSKI

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the Senate Republican team is losing a key player today as we say goodbye to Lisa Wolski, chief of staff to the Republican whip, Senator KYL.

Lisa has been a greatly valued adviser to me as well and to my entire team. We have always valued her intelligence, good strategic sense, and her sound judgment. She has worked extremely hard to make sure we always knew where the votes were, which is very important in this line of work. And, most of all, we appreciate very much the fact that she has done all this with great team spirit.

I want to thank Lisa for her hard work, for me and for the entire Republican team, and we wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SPC BRANDON S. MULLINS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, it is with sadness that I come to the floor today to commemorate a brave Kentuckian who lost his life in service to his country.

U.S. Army SPC Brandon S. Mullins of Owensboro, KY, was killed on August 25, 2011, in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, when insurgents attacked his vehicle with an improvised explosive device. He was 21 years old.

For his heroic service, Specialist Mullins received several awards, medals, and decorations, including the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon, the NATO Medal, and the Combat Infantryman Badge.

Brandon Mullins inherited a proud military tradition. He was the third generation in his family to wear the Nation's uniform. His father Thomas was a military police officer, and as a child Brandon and his brother Shaun used to love to play with his dad's old MP mementoes. They also loved to play on a World War II-era tank that was on display in a park near Brandon's childhood home.

As a kid, Brandon loved sports. Hockey was his favorite. He and his family enjoyed going to Nashville Predators games, but Brandon's favorite team was the Detroit Red Wings.

Brandon also played hockey in high school and was the MVP of his league. He thrived under pressure. One time, Brandon's team found itself in a shoot-out situation for victory in a high-stakes playoff game. Brandon asked his coach to put him in as the goalie. He wanted a chance to step up in a clutch moment for his teammates and, sure enough, his team won the game.

Brandon also enjoyed being outdoors. He was a hunter, a fisherman, and a hiker. His family described him as fearless when it came to physical challenges. He started rollerblading at the age of 4. He is remembered as high spirited, generous, and very popular.

Brandon's family was certainly not surprised when Brandon grew up and enlisted in the military. "He wanted the tough job," his mother Catherine said. "He wanted to fight. He was competitive."

Brandon's brother Shaun had enlisted before him, and so in February 2010 Brandon enlisted in the Army. He deployed to Afghanistan in May of 2011 with Company C, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, based out of Fort Wainright, AK. Once again, he thrived under pressure, this time in the demanding task of fighting for our country.

"Brandon matured very quickly," his father Thomas said.

From the time he entered basic training . . . you could see a big change in his life. He was headed in the right direction with his life.

Brandon loved being in the Army, and would send letters back home about how cool basic training was. Brandon's fellow soldiers quickly took to the new recruit from Owensboro.

"I can honestly say I've never met anyone like Mullins," said SSG Matthew Mills, Brandon's squad leader.

SPC Deroderick Jackson, another one of Brandon's fellow soldiers, said this:

He was just a big help to me. Every time he saw I had a hard time, he made me smile and told me to get it together. On a mission with the Afghan National Army, I was real tired and they were going real fast and [Brandon] said, "You've got this, brother!"

Another fellow soldier, COL Todd R. Wood, recalls that Brandon:

. . . was best described as the epitome of selfless service—he took on details others did not want, he did not complain, he just did it,

and usually with a smile. He carried the heaviest loads and helped out everyone he could. He was always concerned about others first.

Brandon's fellow soldiers also recall he had a fun side. "I remember he was really goofy," said Private First Class Adam Baldrige.

One time I remember we got in trouble and we were getting smoked until we almost had a tear rolling down our cheeks. He just turned and looked at me and said, "Just remember, they can't smoke rocks."

We are thinking of Brandon's loved ones today, as I recount his story for my colleagues in the Senate, including his parents Thomas and Catherine Mullins, his brother PFC Shaun Erik Mullins, his sister Bethany Rose Mullins, and many other beloved family members and friends.

This past September 11 was the tenth anniversary of the brutal terrorist attacks that ushered in a new era of military readiness and resolve for America. On that day, the Mullins family held a memorial service for Brandon. More than 800 people came to show their respects.

The funeral procession, led by 576 motorcycles, traveled from Good Shepherd Church to Owensboro Memorial Gardens at a slow, somber pace—taking 1 hour to drive 11 miles.

On that day, CPT Sean J. Allred of the 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, wrote Thomas and Catherine Mullins a letter.

I hope that through writing this letter you may know how your son lived as a warrior and will continue to live in our hearts and in our victories.

Know that your son was a brother to all men in his Platoon and all who knew him . . . Brandon was a credit to you and how you raised him. I am forever indebted to him and will honor his memory in future actions.

Captain Allred's sentiments are shared by this Senate. Our Nation can never repay the debt owed to Specialist Mullins or the sacrifice he made that weighs so heavily on his family. But we can honor his service and ensure that he will never be forgotten by his country. It is thanks to heroes such as SPC Brandon S. Mullins that America enjoys the freedoms we do today.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT OF 2012

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2112, which the clerk will report by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2112) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food

and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid (for Inouye) amendment No. 738, in the nature of a substitute.

Reid (for Webb) modified amendment No. 750 (to amendment No. 738), to establish the National Criminal Justice Commission.

Kohl amendment No. 755 (to amendment No. 738), to require a report on plans to implement reductions to certain salaries and expenses accounts.

Durbin (for Murray) amendment No. 772 (to amendment No. 738), to strike a section providing for certain exemptions from environmental requirements for the reconstruction of highway facilities damaged by natural disasters or emergencies.

Landrieu amendment No. 781 (to amendment No. 738), to prohibit the approval of certain farmer program loans.

Vitter modified amendment No. 769 (to amendment No. 738), to prohibit the Food and Drug Administration from preventing an individual not in the business of importing a prescription drug from importing an FDA-approved prescription drug from Canada.

Coburn amendment No. 791 (to amendment No. 738), to prohibit the use of funds to provide direct payments to persons or legal entities with an average adjusted gross income in excess of \$1,000,000.

Coburn modified amendment No. 792 (to amendment No. 738), to end payments to landlords who are endangering the lives of children and needy families.

Ayotte amendment No. 753 (to amendment No. 738), to prohibit the use of funds for the prosecution of enemy combatants in article III courts of the United States.

Crapo amendment No. 814 (to amendment No. 738), to provide for the orderly implementation of the provisions of title VII of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.

Merkley amendment No. 879 (to amendment No. 738), to prohibit amounts appropriated under this Act to carry out parts A and B of subtitle V of title 49, United States Code, from being expended unless all the steel, iron, and manufactured products used in the project are produced in the United States.

Moran amendment No. 815 (to amendment No. 738), to improve the bill.

Bingaman modified amendment No. 771 (to amendment No. 738), to provide an additional \$4,476,000, with an offset, for the Office of the United States Trade Representative to investigate trade violations committed by other countries and to enforce the trade laws of the United States and international trade agreements, which will fund the Office at the level requested in the President's budget and in H.R. 2596, as reported by the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

Blunt (for Grassley) amendment No. 860 (to amendment No. 738), to ensure accountability in Federal grant programs administered by the Department of Justice.

Menendez amendment No. 857 (to amendment No. 738), to extend loan limits for programs of the government-sponsored enterprises, the Federal Housing Administration, and the Veterans Affairs' Administration.

Lee motion to recommit.

Sessions amendment No. 810 (to amendment No. 738), to prohibit the use of funds to allow categorical eligibility for the supplemental nutritional assistance program.

Blunt (for DeMint) amendment No. 763 (to amendment No. 738), to prohibit the use of funds to implement regulations regarding the removal of essential-use designation for epinephrine used in oral pressurized metered-dose inhalers.