

want obstruction, particularly for its own sake. They understand compromises have to be made in a legislative body, that it cannot be "my way or the highway."

Unfortunately, all too often in the past year we have seen too much of that attitude. The fact that we are battling 3 for 3 this week in terms of important issues: a highway bill, judicial nominees, and an IPO bill with broad bipartisan consensus, hopefully, augers well for the future.

Perhaps the era of obstruction and confrontation has passed its high-water mark. Perhaps it is now politically damaging to block legislation for its own sake or because someone does not get 100 percent of what they wanted. Perhaps a new era of more bipartisan consensus and more accomplishments for the American people to deal with our problems is upon us. I hope and pray it is so.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CENTURY ALUMINUM

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I am in this Chamber with my colleague, Senator JOE MANCHIN, who has as much interest in this as I do and feels the happiness from a wonderful event which will happen, we hope, tomorrow in West Virginia, which will not necessarily be a moment that most people around the country or even in this body will notice, but it is an enormous moment to the people of West Virginia because it has been a long festering problem that we believe will be ratified tomorrow.

What am I talking about? Tomorrow the retirees at Century Aluminum in Ravenswood, WV, hopefully, are going to ratify a decision that has been reached by the Steelworkers, led by a local heroine, an icon of Appalachia, Karen Gorrell, who has stood out all night by the roadside protesting.

Back in 2009, Century Aluminum—and aluminum is a volatile industry but very much of an up-industry now—simply shut down. Hundreds of jobs and hundreds of retirees and their families were just cut out and cut off. Periods of negotiation went on with Century Aluminum under the particular management then, but it wasn't going anywhere. There wasn't a lot of goodwill that I was able to detect.

Then comes the kind of change you really want to see. You start with good people, good workers. It is a hard job. It pays pretty good wages, good benefits—not defined benefits in terms of health care but VIPA benefits, which are benefits nevertheless for retirees.

They are good people who are located in a rural county in West Virginia, which is kind of the heartland of West Virginia where a lot of good people come from. They tend to work very hard and to be very wonderful. What these men and women have always wanted is simply to be treated fairly.

In a world of big corporations, decisions are made from far away places by corporate leaders. But it doesn't necessarily need to work that way—that the people on the line are out in the cold without benefits, without health care at all. There they are picketing or just being miserable, and the world pays little attention because there is not a lot of progress made, so the attention is pulled away from it. But not if you are under the leadership of Karen Gorrell, the local union leader there. She is a fantastic woman who brings not only ferocity—she went to a corporate meeting—and the occupant of the chair will enjoy this because I know him well—wearing a T-shirt that was sort of the hand of the corporation with blood dripping off it, and it was a stockholders meeting. She was so good that people sort of respected her for that rather than resent her for it. But she is a strong, classic Appalachian person, a very strong union leader.

What happened was there was new management at Century. The State had been extraordinarily helpful, the legislature, putting up a lot of money over a period of 10 years. What should have been able to happen was that Century Aluminum would open again, people would go back to work. But then the big enchilada would be if the Ravenswood plant itself, the old Kaiser plant, would open, for which there is a real purpose.

They reminisce in West Virginia about Henry Kaiser, who obviously built that plant many years ago, going through the plant shaking hands with workers, knowing their names. That was a different era, and he was an extraordinarily good man.

Senator MANCHIN and I want this situation to be worked out. We have both worked very hard on it. Actually, the parties weren't that far apart. What made them not that far apart was that the issues were complicated, but it was the will to settle that predominated. Each side didn't get exactly what they wanted, but each side, in a sophisticated, nuanced way, understood there were very high stakes for losing everything and very high stakes, including a lot of money from the West Virginia Legislature over 10 years. The stakes for winning, for settling were extraordinary.

Everybody rose to the occasion. This could never have happened without the leadership of Karen Gorrell and her particular type of leadership, which I found wonderful, just refreshing. I have been out there many times over the years because Century Aluminum has had a lot of problems. I am sure Senator MANCHIN has too.

Now I am praying and hoping they are going to ratify this agreement to-

tomorrow. If that is so, I am not sure the news will reach Baltimore, and I am certain it will not reach Vancouver, but it will reach all over West Virginia. It will be an example of labor and management, with good corporate and union leadership, coming together at precisely the right moment, after a tremendous amount of strain and stress and anger.

I conclude my statement just praying that the retirees will do what I think they are going to do tomorrow—I encourage that—and accept the agreement agreed to by the union and Century Aluminum. If that happens, whether they know about it in Vancouver doesn't interest me much. They will know about it in West Virginia, and I care about that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I also rise in support, along with Senator ROCKEFELLER. What a good job he has done. We have both had the honor of serving our great State as Governors. As every Governor and legislator knows, we fight for every job we can create. We fight like the dickens to save every job we have.

As the Senator said, he has been fighting these battles for many years. I was in the legislature when he was our Governor. We fought side by side then. When I became Governor, he was a Senator in Washington, and he fought along with me on every job we created and saved. Now here we are again side by side fighting.

Ravenswood, in Jackson County, is a very unique place. In Ripley and all the surrounding towns, we have about 22,000 people who live there, and 4,200 people live in Ravenswood, 3,000 in Ripley. One can tell how that is the lifeblood, truly, of the community. Lucy Harbert is the mayor. She is dogmatic. Karen Gorrell is unbelievable. There are men and women there fighting basically for what was promised to them, fighting for survival.

I think the big story is that in 2009, the plant closed, as the Senator said. In 2010, all the employees were told all of their health care benefits that had been promised to them and negotiated in good faith were gone—all gone by the stroke of a pen. The courts upheld it.

Lo and behold, we have a new management team. We have Mike Bless—and we are talking about Monterey, CA. Clear out there. These people came in and saw what we had, the fabric of the town and the fortitude of these people. So management said: We need to do something. Karen Gorrell and the rest of them never let up. They said: We want to be treated fairly. We want what we were promised. Everyone made considerations here.

What we have coming up with a vote tomorrow—as the Senator said, there will be a vote for the retirees to accept the proposal they have been negotiating, which I am hopeful and I know Senator ROCKEFELLER is too—will be

passed tomorrow. That is the first step in the right direction. The State has entered as a partner also. With the State, they will work out power contracts and things of this sort. How important are power prices? How important is the coal and the power that coal produces? Without that, we would be dead in the water.

There is so much promising going on. But when you see a community come together—Governor Earl Ray Tomblin, our friend, worked hard in the legislature. This is not a story we see today in America that much.

In 2009, the plant closed. Over 600 people lost their jobs in a little town of 4,200 people. Now we have a chance to at least get 400 or 500 back on the job. We have not seen that turn around too much. You can imagine why Senator ROCKEFELLER and I are so excited, and I think more than anything we are so proud that we represent a State that has so much resilience. They have stuck together. So our hat is off, from the corporate end to the union end, to the people working together from the community.

I need to say that the President of the Steelworkers Union, Leo Girard, has just been a rock. Leo gets right in there. The Steelworkers stood behind their retirees. They stood behind them. They would not take anything less than the retirees being treated fairly. That brought everybody to the table and gave us the glue it took.

Senator ROCKEFELLER is persuasive, as you know, in his ability to get involved and persuade people to do the right thing, and all of us were behind this effort. It came to fruition. Today, West Virginia is a brighter spot, and Ravenswood is a brighter place. Hopes are up again. The people are enthusiastic, and we can see they have a little skip in their step. That means an awful lot. These are the hardest working people, who don't ask for a whole lot—just an opportunity to take care of themselves and their families.

To Lucy Harbert, Karen Gorrell, Mike Bless, and Leo Girard, Senator ROCKEFELLER, and the entire West Virginia delegation, I think everybody should be extremely pleased. Tomorrow we know it will be a successful vote. We are going to show the country we can compete with anybody in the world. I know the occupant of the chair feels the same way in Maryland, and you have been able to. We will work together on this and start rebuilding America one job at a time. This is 400 jobs at one time.

With that, I say thank you to all of the good people in West Virginia who made this happen. I thank Senator ROCKEFELLER for his leadership over the years. I have been honored to work with him. He has been a tremendous mentor. We will continue to work together for many years.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

A SECOND OPINION

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, as I have for the last 2 years since the health care law was signed by the President, to give a doctor's second opinion about the health care law. I do this week after week because we need to recall that it was NANCY PELOSI, then Speaker of the House, who famously said that Congress had to first pass President Obama's health care bill to find out what was in it.

It has now been 2 years, and we continue to find out more and more what is in the law as people read it. Even this morning the Wall Street Journal had a story about the upcoming 2-year anniversary and, of course, the Supreme Court hearings, which will begin in a little over a week, as to whether this health care law is constitutional. I believe it is not, but there will be 3 days devoted to that discussion. And the Wall Street Journal article today has a poll covering the time period since this health care law was passed all the way through today which reflects that the health care law is still more unpopular than it is popular. More people are opposed to the health care law even 2 years after it was passed than are supportive of it.

Interestingly, other studies of the American populace show that the more people know more about the health care law, the less they are actually likely to support it. And for those people who have talked to a health care provider—a nurse, a doctor, or a therapist—they are even less likely to be supportive of the health care law. The more people learn about the health care law, the more they do not like it.

So much of this specifically relates to the mandate that everyone in the country is going to be obligated to buy a government-approved product. That is the crux of the debate that will be held within the Supreme Court in the weeks ahead and in the decision to come within the next couple of months.

It is interesting to go through the process of how this law was passed: a party-line vote, votes in the middle of the night, closed-door negotiations in spite of the President saying all deliberations and discussions would be on C-SPAN, and the American people saying: No, do not pass this. In spite of the objections of people all across the country, this bill was crammed through the House and the Senate and signed by the President at a time when people said: This isn't going to give us what we want. What we want is the care we need from a doctor we want at a price we can afford.

The President made lots of speeches and lots of promises to let the public

know he was listening to them. But he wasn't listening to the public. He wasn't listening to this side of the aisle. That is why this health care law actually fails patients, it fails providers—the nurses and the doctors who take care of those patients—and it fails the American taxpayers.

I remember the President saying: If you like your plan, you can keep it. And when he was running for the Presidency, he said: You will not have to change plans. He said: For those who have insurance now, nothing will change under the Obama plan except you will pay less. That is what he said. Yet at a townhall meeting in Wyoming—I go home to Wyoming every weekend and visit with people—when I asked a group of 100 citizens how many, under the President's health care plan, believe they are actually going to pay more, every hand went up—every one. The President said the law would save \$2,500 per family. The American people haven't seen that. So they listened to the President's promises, but now they say: I am not sure I can believe what he has to say.

The President talked about protecting Medicare. He did that in an address to Congress in 2009. Yet, with the health care law, they took \$500 billion away from Medicare—not to save it or to strengthen it but to start a whole new government program for other people. So when I talk to seniors, they have great concerns about the way Medicare has been handled in this health care law. Specifically, their concern is that they are not going to be able to find a doctor to take care of them.

First of all, in terms of the health care law, it has failed in helping us have more doctors and nurses and nurse practitioners and physician assistants. But when I talk to doctors at home in Wyoming—and I practiced medicine for 25 years—what I see is offices that are full, and what I hear is that they continue to care for patients they have taken care of for years who are on Medicare, and they continue to care for patients who are currently Medicare age, but in terms of someone who may move to a new town or someone whose doctor may retire, it is getting harder and harder for patients on Medicare to find doctors to take care of them.

A lot of it has to do with the concerns about reimbursement—the so-called doc fix that was part of the debate recently when we extended that with the payroll tax holiday legislation. But there is very little certainty that comes out of Congress, and doctors look at that and say: How can I make decisions about my practice and my life when I don't know if they are going to cut Medicare fees by 27 or 30 percent at the end of the year? They faced a similar situation at the end of last year, and they faced a similar situation at the end of February. So it is not a surprise that doctors are more and more reluctant to accept new