

Why are they so afraid? Why are the Republicans so afraid?

We all know finding common ground isn't easy. They have a program where they are asking for \$92 billion more in cuts in discretionary programs than we are, such as the Head Start Program which allows tens of thousands of little boys and girls to get a head start; Meals on Wheels, where millions of people have been eliminated from that program; medical research—a Senator I had a conversation with this morning has a friend with a rare form of breast cancer. A program to help this woman cure this terrible disease has been eliminated where she lives.

We know finding common ground will not be easy, but it should be done. We should find common ground. We are not afraid to work a little harder to get this done. We are not afraid of transparency. Let's sit down together and find out where each stands. We have done our work over here. Let's find out what the Republicans want to do.

We need to let the American people know where we stand. That is why transparency is so important. Democrats and Republicans will never, ever find common ground if we never get to the negotiating table. So why don't my Republican colleagues want to go to conference? Last night, a junior Senator from Texas said Republicans would agree to go to conference only if Democrats first would give in to their demands.

What were those demands? Well, they want more job-killing budget cuts. They want to make sure no millionaire is ever asked to contribute to the deficit reduction. That is what he asked: Before we go to conference, we want to make sure that happens.

He also said he wanted to make sure—remember this, we have been there before. Maybe the junior Senator from Texas doesn't remember, but we remember. We remember the government being on the verge of losing its ability to be part of the world community by not paying its debts.

Rightfully or wrongfully, this country accumulates debts. Raising the debt ceiling doesn't do away with those debts; they are still there. We have an obligation to pay the debts that are incurred by this country.

My friend, the junior Senator from Texas, said he wanted a guarantee, as a bargaining pawn, we would make sure the debt ceiling would not be raised—or words to that effect. We have been through that before. The President made it very clear: He will not negotiate on this country paying its bills.

Republicans refuse to go to conference unless Democrats give in to positions that were soundly rejected by the American people last November, soundly rejected on the Senate floor with the budget resolution we passed. In other words, Republicans refuse to play the game unless we let them win.

The rules are set. We know what the rules are, so let's get down and go forward with the rules. But they are not

willing to do that. Like schoolyard bullies, if Republicans can't win, they will take the ball and go home. That is what we were told last night. This is a stunt, but it is a nonstarter.

What is the real reason Republicans are shying away from their conference? Speaker BOEHNER has said he would rather not subject his Members to politically tough votes. Now, that is probably very truthful. House Republicans are afraid of a backlash from a radical tea party that controls what they do over there and has such significant sway in what happens over here. They are afraid of the backlash from the radical tea party if they even discuss a compromise with us. Even if they agree to go to conference with us, they are afraid that will hurt them.

Partisan politics is no reason to shy away from bipartisan negotiations. Republicans got what they asked for. They wanted regular order, and they have regular order.

Now it is time to embrace the regular order they said they wanted. It has been going on here for centuries. That is what they want. They should complete what they asked for. It is time to get away from a last-minute fix and short-term solutions. It is time to engage in meaningful negotiations and a responsible budget process.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

THE ECONOMY

Mr. MCCONNELL. According to data just released by the Labor Department, retailers are going to be cutting hours at a rate unseen in more than 30 years. Investor's Business Daily had this to say of the decline:

[It] doesn't appear related to the economy, which has been consistently mediocre. Instead, all evidence points to the coming launch of ObamaCare, which the retail industry has warned could cause just such a result.

So this is just the latest in a string of bad news related to the rollout of ObamaCare, just the latest reason the law needs to be repealed. What is more, businesses are being forced to cut workers' hours at a time when so many Americans, nearly 8 million last month according to Labor, have already been squeezed into part-time positions in which they would prefer not to be in the first place. Many of these are Americans who would probably much rather be working full time. Yet thanks to ObamaCare, many of them may be forced to work even less.

Actually, it gets worse. Labor also reported that total benefits for employees in service operations actually declined last quarter. That is the first such deterioration in more than a decade. Some speculate this piece of bad news could be attributed to ObamaCare as well.

All of this, bear in mind, is for a law, the full brunt of which hasn't even begun to come online yet. We are still many months away. Yet stories like this seem to be piling up.

When it comes to the implementation of ObamaCare, I fear some of the worst hit are likely to be the small businesses and the Americans who work for them. These are the hometown companies that struggled so mightily just to keep their doors open throughout the Obama economy, whose owners sacrificed so much in order to keep their families fed and their employees on the payroll. These businesses struggled against fierce economic headwinds, and they actually survived.

Will they be able to survive the next assault headed their way, to absorb the blows of ObamaCare, blows thrown at them by their own government at a time when they are already so vulnerable? Well, if things keep going as they are, it is hard to see how they will.

Just listen to this: Last week, a small business owner in the barbecue restaurant business testified at a field hearing of the House Education and the Workforce Committee. The owner of that company said it will cost his business up to \$200,000 to implement the ObamaCare mandate, a \$200,000 hit. What is that company's projected profit for 2013? It is \$240,000. Incredible, absolutely incredible.

It is not hard to see why the Democratic chairman of the Finance Committee called this law a "train wreck." It is not hard to see why so many Democrats are now airing their concerns about the law in public. Frankly, I wish they had considered these consequences before, not after passing a law. It is not like Republicans weren't warning about all of this. It is not like independent experts across the country weren't saying almost the same thing we were saying, and it is not like common sense wouldn't simply dictate much of these outcomes either.

I see that the President has decided to pivot once again to jobs. I can't even count how many times he has done one of these pivots at this point, so I will not try. But I presume he will jet off throughout the country to campaign-style rallies in order to bash Congress and claim that none of this is his fault. In the same vein, we hear he is going to have an ObamaCare event this Friday. I would be willing to bet he is not going to take responsibility there for ObamaCare's negative effects on our economy either or on so many families and small businesses.

It is about time he did. He should use that event to do so because he needs to be straight with the American people. He needs to prepare them for everything that is coming their way—the wage cuts, the lost jobs, the higher premiums, everything our country can expect as a result of ObamaCare.

That small business owner I mentioned earlier also had this to say:

Major companies I am sure have legal advisors that will . . . guide them through this

legislation. Small businesses such as ours must obtain as much available information as possible and do their best to live by the letter of the law. Then because this act is [complicated], hope and pray to not get penalized.

The law-abiding citizens of this country shouldn't have to pray for leniency from their own government. Last I checked, the government existed to help the public, not to antagonize it.

After ramming the law through Congress the way he did, ignoring the warnings all these things would happen, ignoring the will of the American people, honesty and transparency is the very least President Obama owes the American public at this point. What he needs to do, actually, is join with Republicans in agreeing to repeal this job-killing law. He needs to acknowledge the need to scrap it and replace it with the types of commonsense reforms that will lower cost, because this law is not working. I think he already knows that. Republicans certainly know it. And more and more Democrats are coming around to that realization too. So let's skip the scripted campaign events and actually work together to get something positive done for jobs, health care, and our economy. If President Obama is willing to work with us, we are here and ready to get to work.

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. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak up to 10 minutes each, and with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half.

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, following the leader's comments about the health care law, I found it interesting this morning to pick up the New York Times and see the headline above the fold, on the front page: "New Worries for Democrats on Health Law." In the very first sentence, it says:

Democrats are worried that major snags will be exploited by Republicans in next year's mid term elections.

I would say Democrats ought to be worried about the fact there are going to be major problems with this health

care law—a health care law that was forced through the Senate, forced through the House, without listening to the American people. That is the concern Democrats ought to have, because the American people's health is being jeopardized as a result of the law we are now facing.

So I come to the floor today to talk a little about what we have learned about the President's health care law over the last week—the week we have been away traveling our States, visiting with people at home. It has been all over the headlines and it is also on the minds of the American people. It certainly was in Wyoming. As I talk to colleagues from around the country, they have heard a lot about this as they traveled their home States.

When we go back home to our States, a lot of Senators hear from their constituents about how worried they are about how this specific law is going to affect their care, their jobs, and their paychecks. It is what I heard this last week, and it is no different than what I have heard week after week after week.

I practiced medicine for 25 years, and I hear from patients who are worried about a new layer of Washington bureaucrats who are going to be sitting now between them and their doctor. I hear from families who are worried they won't be able to keep the insurance they have now, even though the President promised them they would be able to keep the insurance they have if they like it. I hear from employers who are worried they won't be able to afford all of the law's new requirements. That is what people are telling me when I travel the State of Wyoming.

This is interesting. According to the newspaper "The Hill," which came out last week, Wednesday, May 1, I am not the only one. Here is the headline on the front page of the paper recently: "Botched ObamaCare Tops Dem Fears for '14.'"

Of course, that is a reference to the 2014 elections. The article talks about how anxious a lot of Washington Democrats are about the law they voted for. It talks about how, if the rest of the law's implementation doesn't go well, voters are going to know exactly who to blame.

Democratic candidates across the country know about it. That is why we see a Democratic candidate running today in this special congressional election in South Carolina trying to distance herself from the health care law. How did she do it? Let's turn the tape back to last week's debate in a congressional race: Special election, South Carolina. Here is what she had to say.

Obamacare is extremely problematic, it is expensive, it is a \$500 billion higher cost than we originally anticipated, it's cutting into Medicare benefits, and it's having companies lay off their employees because they are worried about the cost of it. That is extremely problematic.

That is a Democrat, running for Congress, who said that last week. The election is today.

Another Democrat, the chairman of the Energy Committee, had this to say.

There is a reason to be very concerned about what's going to happen with young people. If their premiums shoot up, I can tell you, that is going to wash into the United States Senate in a hurry.

Well, I agree with the chairman of the Senate Energy Committee. So what are the prospects for implementation? Well, one of the key architects of the law, another Democrat, says he sees "a huge train wreck coming down." That is what Senator BAUCUS said, and I think he is right; we are headed for a train wreck. That is what concerns the people I talk to—all those patients, the employers, the families I mentioned.

So what does the President have to say about this? Well, he was asked about it the other day at a press conference. The President's answer went on for more than 1,000 words, but it came down to one thing. He said:

For the 85 to 90 percent of Americans who already have health insurance, this thing has already happened. They do not have to worry about anything else.

Can that really be what the President thinks? He even repeated the idea a couple of times. He said 90 percent of Americans don't have to worry. I would say, with all due respect to the President, people are worried, and they have every right to worry. There are many parts of this law that still have not "already happened," in spite of what the President says. Those things are going to give the American people a lot more to worry about.

In fact, the Washington Post Fact Checker looked into what the President said—what the President claimed during his news conference. The Fact Checker found the President ignored the fact—completely ignored the fact—that 10 million people face the prospect of losing their current health care. The Fact Checker went on to cite a report from the Congressional Budget Office that said millions of people are going to be priced out of the insurance they have now—insurance that works for them. That is because of all the expensive extras the new government-approved insurance is going to have to cover, and which is also government mandated.

The Post pointed out:

... even unions, which were big supporters of the law, have grown wary because it may drive up costs for their health-care plans.

Twenty million people are covered by those plans the unions are worried about. The Washington Post Fact Checker also cited \$1 trillion in tax increases in the law, which is going to hurt a lot more people.

The Medicare Actuary predicts 15 percent of hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and home health agencies could leave the Medicare Program by 2019. These are our seniors. These are people who have continued to pay into the program. Yet we see these other groups saying we have had enough. Why? Because of the cuts to the programs and the payments the President