

I want to especially recognize the many men and women who work to enforce the law in my home State of Kentucky. Many of them have traveled to Washington this week, and today I will have the pleasure of meeting with some of Kentucky's finest. I want to personally thank them for bravely risking their lives in service of people across the Commonwealth.

Earlier this month in Richmond, Kentucky, a solemn ceremony was held at the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial on the campus of Eastern Kentucky University. This memorial lists the names of every known fallen peace officer in Kentucky history. Along the bottom of it are the words, "Blessed Be the Peacekeepers."

The ceremony was held to add the names of two law-enforcement officers from Kentucky who were killed in the line of duty in 2012. Hodgenville Police Officer Mark A. Taulbee was killed in a vehicle pursuit on September 16. Marion County Sheriff's Deputy Anthony Rakes was shot during a traffic stop on November 14.

I extend my sympathies to the families of Officer Taulbee and Deputy Rakes for their tragic loss.

Their names will be added, along with 6 other Kentucky peace officers whose names had not previously been on the memorial. There will be a total of 509 brave Kentuckians on that wall.

I know my colleagues in the U.S. Senate join me in holding the deepest admiration and respect for the many brave law-enforcement officers across Kentucky and the Nation. Theirs is both an honorable profession, and a dangerous one. It is also a necessary one, as the maintenance of peace and order in a civil society that we take for granted could not exist without them.

Kentucky is grateful to our law-enforcement officers and their families. And we are grateful for the sacrifice of Officer Mark A. Taulbee and Sheriff's Deputy Anthony Rakes to preserve the rule of law.

I ask unanimous consent that the names of the Commonwealth of Kentucky law-enforcement officers added to the Kentucky Law Enforcement Memorial this year be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Mark A. Taulbee; Hodgenville Police Department; End of Watch: September 16, 2012.

Anthony Rakes; Marion County Sheriff's Office; End of Watch: November 14, 2012.

Releigh Killion; U.S. Marshal; End of Watch: May 24, 1884.

Thomas D. Martin; Stanford Police Department; End of Watch: May 16, 1931.

Theo Madden; Knott County Sheriff's Office; End of Watch: March 10, 1933.

Vernon C. Snellen; Kentucky State Police; End of Watch: February 20, 1937.

Bill Baker; Perry County Sheriff's Office; End of Watch: March 11, 1950.

George Puckett; Perry County Sheriff's Office; End of Watch: April 26, 1950.

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 10:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half.

The Republican whip.

OBAMA SCANDALS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, like millions of Americans, the events of the last few days and the last few months have caused me to reflect on the nature of our Federal Government and our special system of federalism which delegates to the Federal Government certain powers but reserves to the States and the people those remaining powers. That is roughly what the 10th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution says.

I have also reflected a little bit on what some wise people have said over our history, and even before America was founded, about the nature of power, government power: Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Our Founders pointed out in the Federalist Papers and elsewhere that the concentration of power in the hands of the few is the very definition of tyranny. We have learned from hard experience over the course of our Nation's history that when government thinks it knows best, particularly here in Washington, in a country as big and diverse as ours, the natural tendency then in Washington is to try to suppress the voices of those who see things differently, those who want to exercise their constitutional rights, particularly to free speech, freedom of association, and, yes, even freedom of the press.

It is not true to say we have not been warned about the dangers of concentration of power in the Federal Government, and big government, and the human frailties that follow. We have been warned time and time and time again. Now we have been reminded once again of the wisdom of our Founders and the wisdom of the structure of the U.S. Constitution.

Over the last week a series of events has highlighted the administration's massive credibility gap. First, we learned more details about the coordinated attempt to misrepresent the September 2012 terrorist attack in Benghazi, Libya. You may recall immediately after that attack the President was at a press conference, and he said later: Well, I said it was a terrorist attack then. That was reviewed by the

Fact Checker in the Washington Post—hardly an unsympathetic newspaper editorially to the administration's point of view—and the Fact Checker gave the President of the United States four Pinocchios. Some ask why four Pinocchios? I think the true answer is because they never give five Pinocchios—maybe they do—but you get the point.

Of course we cannot escape the fact and we should not ignore the fact that this attack took four American lives.

Then we learned this last week that a senior IRS official had acknowledged that her agency deliberately targeted certain political speech and activity for harassment, using the instruments of power given to the Internal Revenue Service. Perhaps the most awesome, pervasive, and potentially intrusive power the Federal Government has is in the hands of that agency. Interestingly, the White House counsel said she learned about it in April. The President said he did not learn about it until later. An investigation needs to be undertaken, and I am happy Senator MAX BAUCUS, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and Senator ORRIN HATCH, the ranking member of the Finance Committee, have committed themselves to doing an investigation of the IRS and how this could possibly happen.

On top of all that, the top administrator of Health and Human Services, Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, has been soliciting funds from the very industries she regulates to help implement ObamaCare. It does not take a rocket scientist to imagine the potential for coercion by the government of these private sector industries because of their fear of retribution if they do not contribute to this effort—a huge conflict of interest, and perhaps illegal. We need to get to the bottom of that as well.

So whether the issue is terrorist attacks in Libya, political and partisan abuses by the IRS, or efforts by the Department of Health and Human Services to shake down the health insurance industry they regulate, it appears the birds the Founders warned us about have come home to roost.

The concentration of government power invariably leads to abuse of that power, and it is the same old story of human frailties over and over. It is no respecter of political parties; it has happened to both political parties. We should have been more careful, and we should have listened. We should not have persistently engaged in this power grab in Washington, DC, at the expense of individual liberty on the part of the American people.

What is the price to be paid by these scandals? The first price is a lack of credibility and public confidence in the most basic institutions that make up this government. The other damage is to the credibility of folks at the highest level of the administration. After all, if the administration is willing to prevaricate, mislead, and dissemble

about an al-Qaida-linked attack in Benghazi that cost the lives of four Americans, what else are they willing to prevaricate, mislead, and dissemble about? Can the public trust this administration and its government to provide accurate information about the war on terror or anything else?

Similarly, if IRS officials knew their agency was targeting certain political activity and failed then to hold anyone accountable, how can the American people ever trust the Internal Revenue Service or the Federal Government to be neutral and law abiding?

I heard the junior Senator from Virginia, Senator Kaine, on the radio as I came in this morning. I thought he asked a pretty good question. He said: What does it take to get fired in this town? What does it take to get fired in this administration for coverups and for misleading the American people?

If Secretary Sebelius is willing to strong-arm the very industry she regulates to fund the implementation of ObamaCare, can the American people trust her agency to be objective, evenhanded, and fair-minded as a regulator?

All this boils down to a very sad statistic that demonstrates that the public's confidence in the Federal Government—and particularly in Congress—is at an all-time low.

This is not the end of the story, and it should not be the end of the story. That ought to be the beginning of a bipartisan effort to get to the bottom of these abuses and also to restore ourselves to the constitutional framework our Founding Fathers envisioned when this great experiment of democracy was created more than 200 years ago. It wasn't a national government that dictated to the rest of the country how we should run our lives and what choices we should make; it was a Federal system of separated powers with checks and balances, with authority given to the Federal Government to do things that individuals and the States could not do by themselves, such as national defense. We have gotten far afield from the Framers' vision of how our country should operate or from the constitutional system they created and which we celebrate.

Now, more than ever, Washington needs credibility. If we don't have the public's trust, how in the world will we gain their confidence that we are going to address the many challenges our country faces? I am not pessimistic about our future, I am optimistic about our future, but it will take a change of attitude.

We will need a change of behavior so we can, in some sense, return to the Founders' philosophy on the framework and the structure in which our government operates. The Federal Government has said for too long: We know best; if you don't like it, it is because we have not given you enough information to convince you to like it. We take policies that are unpopular and merely shove them down the throat of the American people and think we are doing our job.

We know we have huge challenges which call on us to work together on a bipartisan basis to regain the public's confidence. I know we can do it. It is a matter of whether we have the political courage and the will to do it.

Here are some of those challenges: The longest period of high unemployment since the Great Depression. We have the largest percentage of the American workforce that simply has given up and quit looking for jobs because the economy is so weak.

The second challenge is a woefully unpopular health care law that even some of the architects of that law now say they see a train wreck occurring in its implementation.

We know our world continues to be dangerous, as Benghazi reminds us, and as we see from murderers, such as Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and people who threaten the innocent. There are people who have chemical weapons. There are people who are fighting for their very lives in places like Syria. Iran is on the pathway to develop a nuclear weapon which will completely disrupt the balance of power in the Middle East and create an arms race, while other countries seek their own nuclear weapons.

Let's not forget Iran was the primary state sponsor of international terrorism with its support for Hezbollah, among others. We have seen in North Africa and elsewhere the proliferation of al-Qaida affiliates and allies. We also need to fix our broken immigration system.

None of these individually are easy things to do. All of them are hard, but they are not impossible if we will try to work hard to regain the public's credibility. We simply need to do our work and respect the wisdom of the ages when it comes to concentration of power and its impact on individual liberty.

We have to be aware of temptations. When power is absolute, we need to see that power is corrupt and be aware of the abuse of that power when it comes to dealing with the American people.

Unfortunately, so far, the Obama administration has valued its agenda more than its credibility. Without regaining credibility, we will never regain the public's trust, and without that trust it will be much harder to solve America's biggest problems. That is the biggest single challenge to President Obama's second-term agenda and to our ability as Americans to show that this 200-plus-year experiment in self-government actually works.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business.

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I am going to take a few minutes to talk

about why the events of the last 24 hours drive home how valuable it would be to have a House-Senate budget conference begin to meet and to deal with the extraordinary set of fiscal challenges our country has in front of us.

As the President of the Senate knows, a number of Senators on our side have been trying to get a budget conference with the House. It has been several months since the budget resolutions in the respective bodies, in effect, have been set in motion. I want to talk about what has happened in the last 24 hours because it again drives home how valuable it would be for the Senate and the House to move to a budget conference at this time.

Yesterday the Congressional Budget Office—of course, our official arbiter of official numbers and trends—made public a new report showing there has been a significant reduction in the budget deficit. In fact, their analysis shows there has been something like a 24-percent reduction from what was estimated a few months ago.

If we couple that new evidence from the Congressional Budget Office with the fact that consumers continue to spend—which is certainly encouraging—the housing market coming back, employers adding 165,000 jobs in April, all of this drives home that in the short term the economy is picking up and we are making real progress.

The point of a budget resolution, on the other hand, is to give us a chance to look long term and look at the next 10 years how Democrats and Republicans can come together, for example, on the long-term challenge of holding down health care costs. We have certainly seen progress in the last few months on that.

There is a debate about why health costs have been moderating of late. I happen to think it is because providers and others are beginning to see what is ahead, but we can have that debate. Certainly there is a lot more to do in terms of holding down health care costs for the long term, and that is what I wish to see the Senate and House go to in terms of the budget resolution.

For example—and I think I have talked about this with the President of the Senate before—chronic care is where most of the Medicare money goes. Chronic care is for people with challenges with heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. We have some ideas we believe could be bipartisan, and would be exactly the kind of thing the House and Senate should take up in a conference on the budget, which we have been seeking for some time.

I only come to the floor today by way of trying to lay out why the events of the last few days dramatize how useful it would be for the Senate and the House to start thinking about what the country cares about, which is our long-term trends.

In fact, this morning I was struck by the fact that some economic theorists