

times. It is a test that I apply whenever I evaluate legislation, and it is called the more-higher-less test. When legislation hits my desk, I evaluate whether that bill will lead to more competition, higher quality, and less cost—hence the more-higher-less test. If the bill passes the test, then it is a bill I will consider supporting.

That test is rooted in my belief that the American free market system has created the world's greatest economy and allowed innovation and creativity to thrive. Competition is the key to improving our health care system, not burdensome regulations and mandates, especially when they are selectively enforced by government bureaucrats.

Perhaps the Obama administration has the same concerns about ObamaCare that I have, and that is why they would rather not fully enforce it until after the next election. But if that is the case, they need to make the tough decisions to address the problems instead of pretending those problems do not exist.

When I was recently back in my home State of Nevada, I toured a medical school and spoke with a number of bright, hard-working students who expressed serious concerns about the effects of ObamaCare. I told them that one of my biggest fears was that the law would turn them all into government employees and it would put a bureaucrat between them and their patients.

Instead of a system like that, we need to reduce the cost of health care services by enacting meaningful tort reform, making insurance more affordable, and providing market-based solutions to meet consumer needs. We need to create an atmosphere that will foster economic growth and job creation instead of punishing the middle class with higher health care premiums and fewer hours at work.

I can understand the Obama administration's decision to delay the employer mandate that is crushing small businesses across the country. That is why so many of us opposed the law to begin with. But the American people deserve far better than a cherry-picking, tax-increasing approach to health care reform. American families should not have to juggle higher health care premiums with the threat of losing their jobs or losing hours at work. They deserve commonsense solutions that will reduce costs and increase access to high-quality care. ObamaCare clearly is not that solution.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

OBAMACARE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this week, the President of the United States, President Obama, has made yet another pivot back to the economy and to jobs, issues the American people have not had the luxury of pivoting away from.

While the President is yet again attempting to refocus on jobs and the economy, giving speeches is not a real solution to our Nations problems. In fact, yesterday President Obama said in his speech that Washington is taking its eye off the ball. Mr. President, you are Washington. You have been President now for 4½ years. These are your policies, policies that are hurting our economy and costing Americans jobs.

As for taking your eye off the ball, the President appears to be swinging with his eyes closed, with his eyes closed to the impact that his policies are having on the economy in this country. We do not have to look very far to see the impact of those policies. The ObamaCare legislation is having a crushing impact on jobs in this country—a crushing impact on the economy.

As we look at the unemployment rate, it is still over 7½ percent. It has been there now for 54 months. That is the worst job record of any President since the Great Depression.

The President's signature law, ObamaCare, continues to hamstring the job market. In June alone, the last month for which we have data, 322,000 Americans were forced into part-time employment status. Those are people who otherwise would have been willing to work full-time but because of these policies that are encouraging more employers to push their employees into part-time status, we have 322,000 individuals in this country who want to work full-time that are now having to work part-time.

ObamaCare and other policies put forward by this administration have been probably the best thing that has happened to part-time jobs. Unfortunately, for most Americans, they want to be working full-time. A recent chamber of commerce survey shows that nearly 75 percent of small businesses are firing workers or cutting hours. As implementation of the ObamaCare law continues, the number of small business owners who take those steps, unfortunately, is only going to increase.

According to a recent Wall Street Journal article:

Rod Carstensen, owner of 11 Del Taco restaurants around Denver began in April converting his mostly full-time workforce into one comprising mostly part-time help to minimize his health care costs. . . . He is plowing ahead despite the ObamaCare administration's reprieve, he said, because we need to get there anyway, and it will take until January 1 of 2015 to make this transition.

He is referring, of course, to the employer mandate which the President

has chosen to delay for this next year when it was supposed to take effect, until January 1 of 2015. Most employers, unfortunately, are not taking great consolation in the fact that this is being delayed by 1 year. They know at some point they are going to have to comply with it.

So they are taking those steps already, which is adding and fueling the data—the numbers I just mentioned with regard to people being forced into part-time jobs. Americans are facing decreased hours which means decreased wages. Additionally, families are facing higher insurance premiums, which further erodes their disposable income and opportunities to invest in a new home or a better education for their children.

A growing number of Americans are realizing ObamaCare is the wrong prescription for families who are at the mercy of an already struggling economy. The administration has been forced to concede that the employer mandate, which is a key component of the ObamaCare legislation, is broken and unworkable, which is why they have delayed it.

We are starting to see Democrats, who have historically been supportive of the law, suddenly jumping from the ObamaCare sinking ship. On Monday, a headline in the Washington Post read, "Moderate Democrats are quitting on ObamaCare."

The article disclosed that fewer than 50 percent of moderate to conservative Democrats now support ObamaCare, which is down more than 25 percentage points since 2010 when it passed. Congressional Democrats are also becoming increasingly skittish about ObamaCare. The House vote last Wednesday on the employer mandate delay passed 264 to 161—35 Democrats joined 229 Republicans in support for that bill.

Additionally, there were 22 House Democrats who voted to delay the law's individual mandate. Even a Democratic Senator has introduced legislation for a 2-year—not a 1-year but a 2-year employer mandate delay. In a recent letter to the Democratic leadership, three large unions expressed grave concerns with the law, led by the Teamsters Union, the organization that Jimmy Hoffa leads.

Once some of the biggest supporters of ObamaCare penned a letter—three major unions penned a letter basically saying that the health care law will "shatter" health benefits and cause "nightmare scenarios." Shatter health benefits, create nightmare scenarios, that is what the unions are saying. The unions also slammed the law for defining a full-time employee as one who works less than 30 hours.

The unions went on to say in their letter that the law "will destroy the foundation of the 40 hour work week that is the backbone of the middle class."

It is very clear that even those who were vocal, those who vigorously defended and supported the ObamaCare

legislation, recognize this is not working and are making it abundantly clear in the statements that they are now making.

Just yesterday, as I mentioned, the President delivered a speech aiming to yet again pivot, as he says, back to jobs and the economy. He used the speech to kick off another campaign-style tour of speeches in hopes that touting his continued commitment to an economic recovery will overshadow these harsh realities of ObamaCare and other economic woes that plague this country.

During yesterday's speech, the President claimed he is dedicated to the middle class and growing the economy from "the middle out." What do these concerns tell us about the state of the middle class? Hard-working Americans are now fearful about their job security, about their health care coverage, and their ability to make ends meet all because of this catastrophic law.

The President's strongest political allies who represent millions of workers say the President's signature domestic achievement is "destroying the backbone of the middle class." Although the President continues to pivot to and away from these issues, Senate Republicans remain focused on creating jobs and growth in this country. It is time for a real recovery. The American people are ready to get back to work.

For 54 months, we have seen unemployment at or above 7½ percent. That number does not reflect the people who have given up looking for work. Let's remove the heavy hand of Washington regulations from our job creators. Let's create certainty for employers so they might hire new employees, not cut the hours of those they already have.

Let's spare the middle class from premium increases. I have seen studies all over the place that suggest, for families, for individuals, premiums across this country are going up. According to Kaiser, for families, it is \$2,500. In order to achieve the goals of addressing these issues in our economy, we have to start with a permanent delay of ObamaCare for all Americans—not just for the employers, not just the employer mandate but the individual mandates, the other regulations that are 20,000 pages high—7½ feet tall are the regulations that have been promulgated to implement this law. It continues to grow by the week.

We did not need a 2,700-page bill. We did not need 20,000 pages of regulations to address the problems we have in our health care delivery system and health care coverage system today. But that is what we got. But the President's job-killing tactics do not stop just at health care. The President's proposed climate change regulations alone would cost 500,000 jobs and reduce household income by up to \$1,000 per year.

Dodd-Frank has already cost \$15.4 billion and 58.3 million hours in paperwork burdens on businesses across the

country. Rather than more campaign-style speeches touting the same old flawed ideas, the President should work with Congress to put more Americans back to work.

By working together, we can enact meaningful regulatory reform that will provide relief to employers and to employees alike. We can fix our health care system in a manner that lowers costs while allowing families to keep the doctors they want. We can enact tax reform that will create economic growth, lower the unemployment rate, and reduce our unsustainable budget deficit.

We can expand access to domestic energy resources in a manner that fully realizes the benefits of increased energy production. This cooperation must start with President Obama getting off the campaign trail and getting to work with Congress on these important issues. So instead of pivoting yet again to the economy, in campaign-style speeches, we need a President that is here, that is working to address the economic woes American families are experiencing.

If you want to start by going out and touting things that you are going to do for the economy, start right away by approving the Keystone Pipeline. That is a no-brainer, in most people's estimation. In fact, the President's own administration has analyzed and reviewed and scrutinized and studied this thing now four different times and concluded it would have not an impact on the climate.

It would create immediate jobs, thousands of jobs, construction jobs, and then jobs over a long period of time. It would help lessen the dependence we have on foreign sources of energy by freeing up transportation of energy resources that come from friendly allies in countries such as Canada to get to American consumers in this country.

There are things the President could be doing that actually will create jobs. Come up here and engage in the debate on tax reform. Commit to tax reform that is revenue neutral, that does not raise taxes on people who create jobs in this country but, rather, lowers the rate to unleash economic growth and job creation in this country. Work with us to repeal, permanently delay, the ObamaCare regulations that are crushing jobs and the economy and, as I pointed out earlier, are forcing more and more Americans into part-time jobs, forcing employers to either cut and reduce their workforce or not hire people they otherwise might hire, and raising premiums for hard-working middle-class families.

Mr. President, it is not Washington that does not have its eye on the ball, it is you who does not have your eye on the ball.

We need you to focus like a laser on the economy and recognize that you can't close your eyes to the harmful, economic impact that your policies are having on too many middle-class Americans and small businesses who

create jobs in this country to generate the economic growth that is necessary to improve the standard of living and the take-home pay of every American family. This is what we need.

I hope the President will get off the campaign trail, come back, and focus on what really matters to middle-class Americans; that is, jobs, the economy, and a better life for their children and grandchildren.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. MURRAY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until 11:30 a.m., and at 11:30 a.m. the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 186, as provided under the previous order.

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

THE BUDGET

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, as the House and Senate have begun debating our separate appropriations bills for the coming year, we have been forced to take a very hard look at the numbers and exactly what so many important programs and services will look like next year under cuts that are forced by sequestration. I am here to tell you, it is not pretty.

As chair of the Budget Committee, it has only served as a reminder to me of just how important it is to fully replace the across-the-board cuts that sequestration has forced us to make, because it is only getting worse.

Some of my Republican colleagues in the Senate, and most of them in the House, it seems, don't believe sequestration has had a real impact on families, their communities, and our military.

I wish to take a few minutes to talk about what I have already seen in my home State of Washington, where the impacts of sequestration have been very severe.