

It was only a few days ago—and the Presiding Officer was here on that occasion also—when we as Members of Congress marked the anniversary of September 11, 2001, during a ceremony on the steps of the Capitol. We had a moment of silence here in the Senate. Yesterday's shootings were the worst loss of life in the Capitol region since those September 11, 2011, attacks which were centered around the Pentagon.

Last week's significant anniversary and yesterday's terrible violence are a reminder that life is fragile and precious. They are a reminder of the debt we owe to those who protect our freedom and our safety, whether they serve in the military or as first responders. The Sergeant at Arms, who is responsible for our safety, was certainly on the job yesterday. He is a dedicated police officer. That is his goal. I still refer to him as Chief Gainer. He was chief of the Capitol Police force before he took responsibility as the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate. He has been a street officer for a long time. He could have done other things—he has a law degree; he is a well-educated man—but his responsibility is to take care of the Senate, and he does that very well.

I appreciate very much—I speak for the entire Senate—those dedicated police, fire, and rescue personnel who put their lives on the line to prevent a lot more loss of life on Monday. In particular, the city owes a debt of gratitude to a K-9 officer, a 24-year veteran of the Metropolitan Police force, a man by the name of Scott Williams who was hurt very badly in the shootings. I wish him a full recovery and thank him for his selflessness.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we have to return to the business at hand. Since the moment President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act, making it the law of the land and ensuring every American has access to quality health insurance at a price they can afford, Republicans have been on an absurd quest to undo this progress.

Republican Members of Congress were horrified when the U.S. Supreme Court said the law we call "ObamaCare"—the Affordable Care Act—is constitutional. That is what the Supreme Court said. In spite of this being the law of the land—and it is the law of the land—House Republicans alone have voted more than 40 times to repeal ObamaCare and are now threatening to shut down the entire government unless this Congress denies funding to implement this very constitutional law.

Under ObamaCare, Members of Congress and their staffs will be covered by exactly the same plans that will extend health insurance to millions of Americans next year. Five hundred thirty-five Members of Congress and 16,000 staff members are treated the same as other employees across America under the law. They are treated that way

under ObamaCare, and rightfully so. Just as 150 million other Americans who get their health insurance through their jobs; that is, their employer, the Federal Government will share a part of the cost of that health care for us, for the 16,000 who work in the Capitol complex—as it has for all Federal employees for many decades. These are the people in Carson City, NV, Reno, NV, and Las Vegas, NV, who answer the phones and help people with problems involving Social Security, veterans' benefits, whether they can be buried at the beautiful cemetery we have in Fernley for veterans or the one in Boulder City where every day we bury lots and lots of people who are veterans.

These are the sorts of inquiries we get around the State of Nevada, and people work long hard hours to respond to those requests. They are dedicated public servants. That is to whom the junior Senator from Louisiana said, No thanks; they are not entitled to anything as far as being treated as everybody else is treated.

Even more directly to the point, Members of Congress and our staffs will live by the same rules and get their health care from the same exchanges as other Americans. But the junior Senator from Louisiana, I repeat, and a number of other misguided Republicans want to force Members of Congress and their staffs to live by a different set of rules. Although Senator VITTER has happily allowed the Federal Government to pay for a portion of his health insurance for many years as a Member of the House of Representatives and as a Member of the Senate, now he wants these 16,000 congressional workers to cover the full cost of health insurance.

With this background, one must ask: If Senator VITTER opposes the employer contribution for congressional staffers, does he oppose it also for the 150 million other Americans whose employers help pay their health insurance premiums? Does he want to discourage private employers from doing the right thing and providing their employees with affordable health insurance coverage? Is it what he wants, to do away with the insurance 150 million Americans have in America? Millions, I repeat, millions and millions of employers rely on this important benefit to attract the best and brightest and hardest working people they can find. Ending the employer contribution would effectively slap 150 million Americans with a big pay cut. Is that Senator VITTER's intention?

If Republican Senators believe they should bear the full cost of their own health insurance, they can, without any change in the law, decline Federal Government support in contributions and pay their own way. They can even encourage their own staffs to do so. Why they would want to do that, I don't understand, but they could do it. But for Senator VITTER and his Republican allies to end the contribution for

16,000 hard-working Federal employees—even after years of accepting the subsidy themselves—is hypocritical and mean-spirited.

In truth, this is only the latest Republican aim to derail the successful implementation of ObamaCare. Last November there was a big poll taken—it is called an election—where Americans overwhelmingly voted to reelect President Obama and to keep ObamaCare as the law of the land. That was the issue of the campaign. Who won that? The American people won, and President Obama won. As for ObamaCare—the constitutional law of the land—the American people said, Let's go ahead and do it. Americans have spoken very loudly and very clearly. It is time to move on to something else. It is the law and has been.

On October 1, about 25 million Americans who have no health insurance will—for the first time, most of them in their entire lifetime—be able to get insurance. What we have found in New York alone is that the insurance is going to save 50 percent of what it did before—it is 50 percent cheaper. In Nevada it is cheaper. It is the way it is all over the country.

According to the voters and according to the Supreme Court of the United States of America, ObamaCare is the law of the land. It is time for Republicans to mature—I guess you could say it a different way: to grow up—and recognize this is the law in America and has been for years. It is time for Republicans to stop denying reality.

The Senate should be passing other legislation. We should be passing an energy efficiency bill that will save taxpayers money, creating good-paying jobs—we need that—rebuilding roads and bridges. I have said here before 70,000 bridges are in a state of disrepair. Yesterday a report came out that 8,000 of them are near collapse—8,000. We are not spending money to take care of that problem. Our highways, our roads, our dams need money. This is not money that goes to the Federal Government so you can have a truck that says: Federal Government building a road or fixing a dam. The money goes to the private sector. That is what we should be doing. For every \$1 billion we spend doing something about the highways, bridges, roads, dams, water systems, sewer systems, we create 47,500 high-paying jobs, and thousands of other jobs spin off from that. That is what we should be doing.

We should be facing the reality of climate change. Look what happened in Colorado. I talked to Senator BENNET yesterday. He said the floods were Biblical. In one part of Colorado, it rained 12 inches in 2 hours. I cannot imagine that. Fires all over the West. Climate change is here. I met with the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh. They do not know what they are going to do with the rise of the sea which is taking place. In that country there is no high ground. It is that way all over the

world. The Marshall Islands—a thousand islands make up the Marshall Islands—55,000 people live there. These islands are being washed away with the new waves they have never seen before.

Climate change is here. We are doing nothing about it. They are spending all of our time, the American taxpayers' time, trying to repeal a law that has been in effect for 4 years.

We should be doing something about immigration reform. They talk about wanting to do something for the economy. Try passing immigration reform. It creates to the positive \$1 trillion. It would reduce our debt by \$1 trillion. Let's do that. Let's fix our broken tax system.

We should be doing those things, not relitigating 4-year-old policy battles. But instead of working with Democrats to effectively implement ObamaCare or to pass new laws that benefit middle-class families, Republicans are obsessed with fighting a real old battle, and they are doing it at taxpayer expense.

Instead of standing with millions of Americans who are already benefiting from ObamaCare, Republicans are standing with insurance companies that would return us to a time when profits came before people. That is the way it works.

Since President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act into law, insurance companies can no longer discriminate against children with preexisting conditions. That is a good deal. If you have a child with diabetes, that boy or girl cannot be denied insurance. If they have epilepsy, they cannot be denied insurance. And in a short few months all Americans will no longer be able to be denied insurance coverage because of a preexisting illness. They can no longer raise your rates for no reason. They can no longer drop your coverage if you get sick. That is the law today.

Today children can no longer be denied insurance, as I have indicated, because they are born with a disease or a disability. And that, I repeat, will soon be extended to all Americans no matter their age. And listen to this one: Very soon being a woman will no longer be considered a preexisting condition, as it was before ObamaCare passed.

In my relatively sparsely populated State of Nevada, tens of thousands of seniors have saved tens of millions of dollars on medicines because the Affordable Care Act has helped close the gap on prescription drug coverage.

More than 3 million young people, including 33,000 young Nevadans, have been able to stay on their parents' health policies until they are 26 years old—3 million. Hundreds of thousands of businesses that already offer their employees health insurance are getting tax credits for doing the right thing.

In a few months almost 130 million Americans with preexisting conditions—and what are some of these preexisting conditions; I talked about it generally a minute ago: high blood pressure, all kinds of things that hap-

pen as you get older—will have access to reasonably priced coverage, no matter their high blood pressure or their heart condition or whatever the situation might be. And 25 million Americans who cannot afford health insurance today will be offered health insurance through the exchanges.

Republicans have been trying for years to erase these gains and force millions of American families once again to rely on the most expensive care in America today, which is where? It is emergency rooms. Hospitals hate it because their bad debt goes up, and all it does is drive up the cost of insurance. The care is not as good as it would be if they could go when they first get sick. They go there out of desperation, and that is what I assume the Republicans want everyone to do. Everyone can go to an emergency room, but it is so expensive and does not do the trick.

So punishing hard-working congressional staff, who put in long hours because they believe in public service—that is, the work we do here in Congress—will not roll back the benefits of ObamaCare. Punishing congressional staffers will not prevent millions of Americans from gaining the health insurance they need and deserve next year. But it will hurt thousands of men and women, including Senator VITTER's colleagues and his own staff.

Instead of willfully denying that ObamaCare is the law or purposely trying to derail its implementation, it is time for Senator VITTER to help us improve the law of the land and ensure every American has access to the kind of care Members of Congress enjoy already, as do 150 million other Americans who get health care through their employers.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

NAVY YARD TRAGEDY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning all of us are thinking about yesterday's tragic events at the Navy Yard, and we are also thinking, in particular, of the brave men and women of our military and the sacrifices they make day in and day out on our behalf.

Once again I would like to extend condolences to the families and friends of those who lost their lives or were injured in this terrible, terrible shooting. Know that your country is with you in these most difficult moments.

I would also like, again, to express sincere gratitude to all the first responders and the medical personnel and law enforcement officers from so many different agencies who worked together to keep all of us informed—and most of all safe—throughout the day.

CONSTITUTION DAY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 226 years ago today about three dozen patriots helped form a more perfect union when they signed their names to a document that guides us still. The U.S. Constitution and the timeless principles that inform it have endured, ensuring liberty and freedom for the people of this country through war and peace, turmoil and prosperity.

So on this September 17, like every Constitution Day, we take a moment to reflect on just how fortunate we are to live in a nation that, unlike any other before or since, was founded on an idea. A big part of that idea is the fact that our rights come not from men but from the Creator, and that for this reason they cannot be taken away.

That is the context in which our Constitution was written, and it is the context of the Bill of Rights that was added to it, and it is just one of the things that makes America exceptional.

The first thing that every Senator, Congressman, or President does upon assuming office is take an oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution. On this Constitution Day I join my fellow lawmakers in recommitting myself to that solemn oath, to doing everything I can to ensure that the principles of constitutional self-government are adhered to and defended in Washington. This glorious document that binds us is the guarantor of our freedom and the light that continues to guide our people.

Today we remember that with pride—and with optimism about the future of this great country.

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, there will now be a period of morning business until 11:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the majority controlling the first 30 minutes and the Republicans controlling the next 30 minutes.

The Senator from Illinois.

IMPORTANT VALUES IN AMERICA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, flags across America are being flown at half-mast this morning because of the terrible tragedy which occurred out that door 1½ miles away yesterday.

Men and women who worked for our Department of Defense to keep America safe reported to work as usual on a