

use because they say it somehow removes the option to use force. The Geneva agreement says nothing of that sort.

Their argument isn't just inaccurate, it is damaging to our efforts. Why would those who believe the threat of force is essential to keeping pressure on Syria and Russia want to argue it is no longer available? Why would those who have accurately said the United States does not need international approval to use its military forces now argue the Geneva agreement leaves us in the position of needing to get international approval to use force in this case when the Geneva agreement does nothing of the sort?

Some have criticized the Geneva agreement for not doing more to aid the Syrian opposition. Russia and Syria tried to get an agreement from us to not support the opposition, but they failed to get that agreement from us in the Geneva agreement or anywhere else. Indeed, the administration is seeking ways to facilitate the additional support for the opposition that so many of us believe is essential.

I believe we should facilitate the provision of additional military aid to the opposition, particularly the vetted elements of Syria's opposition forces, including antitank weapons. Such aid will help the Syrian people defend themselves from the brutal Assad regime, furthering our goal of bringing a negotiated end to his rule.

I find it troubling that so much of the commentary on this topic has not dealt with substance and policy. Washington has been and always will be a political town, but we now reach the point where politics seems to be the only lens through which so many people around here view the most important and serious matters of the day, including national security.

Speculation as to motives, or about potential winners or losers, or who is up and who is down, misses the point. This is not an ice-skating contest with points awarded for style. What is important is our national security and whether this agreement advances it. Removing weapons of mass destruction from the hands of a brutal dictator—a preliminary outcome, yes, but real and tangible—is the direct result of American leadership.

A month, a year, or 5 years ago, an agreement to eliminate Assad's chemical weapons would have been seen as a significant gain for our security and for the world's security, not just for the President who achieved it but far more importantly, again, for the safety of our people, of our troops, and the entire world.

I hope as we continue with the hard work of implementing this agreement and as we seek an end to Bashar al Assad's rule, we can keep our eyes on those goals and skip the superficial political scorekeeping and inaccurate potshots that distract us from achieving those goals.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NAVY YARD TRAGEDY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, as I rise today, I wish to talk about the economy and the need to create an economic climate that strengthens the middle class.

Before I do, I wish to acknowledge, as have many of my colleagues, and to comment on the tragedy that occurred here at the Washington Navy Yard yesterday.

We are going to debate a lot of issues. The business of the country goes on and the business of the Senate goes on, but for the families of the victims of that tragedy yesterday, things stand still. It is important for all of us to take a moment to mourn with them the loss they have experienced and to extend our thoughts and prayers to their families and their loved ones. It is a horrible tragedy. As we continue the back-and-forth we have on the issues of the day, we will remember and keep those families in our thoughts and prayers.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I wish to speak on the economy. The President has yet again this week—in fact, he gave a speech yesterday where he was pivoting back to the economy, a topic that millions of unemployed Americans haven't had the luxury of pivoting away from.

For most Americans, they are living this economy every single day in their personal lives. When the President talks about pivoting back to the economy, this has been a repivot, and a repivot many times. He talks about something else for a while and then talks about coming back to the economy. For the American people, the American economy is, was, has been, and will continue to be the issue for them and their families.

As the President steps up his rhetoric to try and convince a skeptical public that his policies have somehow helped our economy, I think it is important to point out that the President's policies, according to facts, simply aren't working.

The reality is participation in the labor force continues to decline. The August job numbers report a labor participation rate of 63.2 percent. This is the lowest participation rate since August of 1978, 35 years ago when President Carter was President.

What this means is if thousands of Americans haven't given up looking for work, the unemployment rate would be over 10 percent. We talk about the reported unemployment rate, which is 7.3 or 7.4—it has hovered around that

range for a long time—but the real unemployment rate should include those who have quit looking for work. When you add that number in, the unemployment goes up to 10.6 percent.

In August the number of long-term unemployed—those people who have been jobless for 27 weeks or more—remained roughly at 4.3 million people. Those individuals accounted for 37.9 percent of the unemployed. We are not seeing any improvement in the area of people who have been without jobs for a long period of time.

Worse yet, 60 percent of the jobs created this year were part-time jobs. We continue to see evidence that the President's policies, President Obama's policies, are leading to not the creation of full-time jobs but the creation of part-time jobs. In other words, Americans are having to work more than one job to make ends meet, therefore reducing the take-home pay for them and their families. This is another thing we have seen. Take-home pay has gone down in this President's time in office.

The American people understand the President's economic policies have fallen short. That is why, as you look at these various polls, most Americans—the majority of Americans—disapprove of the President's handling of the economy. The reality remains that this administration's policies are hurting jobs in our economy. The President's signature health care law is probably as much to blame for that as anything else.

As I talk to employers in my State of South Dakota and across the country, the recurring theme is the mandates, the requirements, all the new redtape associated—and the higher taxes with the President's health care law—are meaning higher taxes and fewer hours for American workers. According to Americans for Tax Reform, there are 20 new or higher taxes in ObamaCare that will hit American families and small businesses. As a result of these taxes and other policies in ObamaCare, the President's signature health care law significantly impacts what matters most to people, and that is their jobs and their ability to provide for their families. It is no secret that a good job is a critical part of the American dream, but this President's policies are putting that dream farther and farther out of reach for many Americans.

In fact, in selling the law, former House Speaker NANCY PELOSI declared at the time:

This bill is not only about the health security of America, it's about jobs. In its life, it will create 4 million jobs—400,000 jobs almost immediately.

The former Speaker's claims run completely contrary and counter to what we are seeing. People are working fewer hours. As the numbers I have presented before demonstrate, fewer people are actually even participating in the labor force. Americans are discouraged by the lack of economic growth and by ObamaCare's impact on

employers. Their ability to offer quality jobs is taking its toll on our investment.

Only last week Investor's Business Daily reported that due to ObamaCare at least 258 employers cut work hours or jobs so far. Meanwhile, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 71 percent of small businesses say the law makes it harder to hire workers.

According to the July Fed Beige Book, the health care law has been cited as a job market concern. They quote from that report: "Several retailers reported that the Affordable Care Act would lead to more part-time and temporary versus full-time hiring."

The President's health care law is smothering employers in bureaucratic redtape, uncertainty, and taxes. Already more than 20,000 pages of regulations have come from the 2,700-page law. The time and cost of complying with these regulations places a serious burden on the ability to spend time and energy creating new jobs. Time and money that would be spent opening a new store, increasing hours, upgrading equipment, which would create more jobs, is instead being spent on lawyers and consultants who have to help small businesses interpret all of the regulations, all the requirements, and all the mandates created by this administration's health care law.

Poll after poll has shown that ObamaCare is extremely unpopular among a majority of Americans. According to a recent CNN poll conducted by ORC International, nearly 60 percent of Americans said they oppose the Democratic signature law. I would hope the President would begin to be honest with the American people about what this law truly means for jobs and our economy, and I would hope he would begin to listen to Americans. If he does, he will find what most of us have discovered a long time ago; that is, the American people don't want this and American employers and small businesses believe it will lead to fewer jobs and lower take-home pay for the people they employ.

I hope in the days ahead, as we focus on the economy—and if the President is sincere about his pivot back to the economy, he will take into consideration what really ails the economy; that is, excessive taxes, regulations, redtape, bureaucracy, mandates and requirements, many of which are associated with his signature achievement, which is the ObamaCare health care legislation.

What the country does not need right now is another tax increase. What the country needs right now is policies that will expand and grow the economy, that will reform our Tax Code in a way that lowers rates and makes us more competitive in the global marketplace and unleashes American energy in a way that gives us a competitive advantage over our foreign competitors. We can do all of that. All the President has to do is sign off, for ex-

ample, on the Keystone Pipeline, which would create thousands of jobs immediately and many more once it is fully built and working.

It would also mean we do away with the onerous, burdensome requirements of the ObamaCare legislation and replace it with policies that make sense, that actually focus on what will give Americans more access to affordable health care in this country.

We need to reduce spending here in Washington, DC, and quit looking at every problem as an opportunity to raise taxes. That seems to be the Democratic solution for everything. Their budget proposed a \$1 trillion tax increase. The leader of the Democrats here in the Senate has said tax reform has to include \$1 trillion in new taxes. It is not revenue that is the problem here in Washington, it is spending. If we look at revenues, they are up \$284 billion in the first 11 months of this year. We don't have a revenue problem, we have a spending problem. We don't need another tax increase, we need policies that will lower the rates, that will get rid of the redtape and the regulations that are strangling our economy and allow our small businesses to create jobs that will make lives better for middle-class Americans and improve the take-home pay for every family in the country.

The job-killing mandates in ObamaCare are harmful to our economy, they are harmful to jobs, and it is time we delay or repeal it and replace it with commonsense alternatives. We believe that discussion needs to occur, and I hope the President will allow it to occur. It is time to focus on comprehensive, revenue neutral tax reform of our broken tax system, repeal the mandates in Obamacare, and get rid of a lot of the government redtape and regulations that are making it more difficult and more expensive for employers in this country—for small businesses—to grow jobs.

Those are the types of things that will get the economy unleashed, that will expand and grow the economy and create more jobs for ordinary working-class Americans who are out of work and will raise the take-home pay for families in this country, which would allow the quality of life and the standard of living to improve for every American family.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

NAVY YARD TRAGEDY

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, before I make my remarks, I would like to join Senator THUNE and others on the Senate floor who have expressed their compassion and their sympathy for the survivors and the victims of yesterday's terrible tragedy at the Washington Navy Yard. Yesterday was but another grim reminder of the dangerous society we live in, the danger that can confront all of us, and the need for all of

us to be aware and do everything we can to make sure our environment is secure and safe.

To those who were injured, those who sacrificed their lives, those whose loved ones were hit, may God bless their souls and may God bless them in their recovery during this period while dealing with this terrible tragedy.

TRIBUTE TO DR. JOHN D. KNOX, JR.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, tonight in Marietta, GA, my hometown, there will be a celebration I cannot attend. There will be a celebration to honor 50 years of medical service to our community by Dr. John D. Knox, Jr. I hate it that I can't be there because he has been an important part of my life, but I would like to take a minute on the floor of the Senate to pay tribute to Dr. Knox and all those physicians who deliver health care to our people, our citizens in our States, our districts, and our country.

As I pondered what I would say about John Knox on the floor this morning, I was sitting in my office looking at the plaques and certificates all of us receive for various works we have done in public life, and it occurred to me, when you go into a doctor's office you will see a diploma and you might see a Norman Rockwell painting, but really the trophies and tributes to doctors are people walking around with two feet in our communities who have survived a terrible injury or a terrible disease and who are living a normal life because a physician, with his or her training, brought them back to life or cured a terrible problem.

Dr. John Knox has done that for 50 years in my community—50 years as an orthopedic specialist and orthopedic surgeon with Resurgens Orthopaedics, which is one of the largest orthopedic practices in the Southeast. In fact, one of those great trophies to John D. Knox, Jr., is my son Kevin, who in 1989 went through the windshield of a pickup truck on a rural road in south Georgia. He had a double compound fracture of his lower right leg. He landed in a ditch full of dirty water and lay there for 2 hours before help came. Fortunately, he didn't sever an artery, but he was in bad shape.

I got the call at 4 a.m. that no parent ever wants to get—the call that paramedics had my son, that they were on the interstate and did I want them to take him to Augusta Medical College or to Atlanta, GA, for treatment because nobody in rural Georgia had the facility to treat his injuries. I immediately asked them to bring him to Marietta, GA, to Kennestone Hospital, and to immediately call John D. Knox and ask him if he would meet my son at the emergency room. The next 6 weeks my son had four surgeries, all performed by John D. Knox. He had antibiotic therapy to make sure his bone marrow did not get infected from lying in the ditch. For 8 months he got psychiatric and psychological help and