

the minimum wage 40 percent to \$10.10 an hour.

Remember, in the President's State of the Union Message he said a minimum wage hike like that would help low-income families. It is certainly a mystery to me how it would help a low-income family who is relying on a wage earner to provide income when they end up losing their job as a result of the policy.

So the President's definition of "help" is unique, to say the least, because any policy which destroys up to 1 million jobs would be an absolute disaster for low-income families.

The President also made his pitch for a higher minimum wage in the context of his concern about income inequality. He claims to be greatly concerned about income inequality. Yet his policies actually threaten to make it worse.

But don't take my word for it. A news report from a major labor union argues that in its current form, the President's health care law will "heighten the inequality that the administration seeks to produce."

These are not political adversaries of our President and his party. These are supporters of the Affordable Care Act—ObamaCare—who have now said in its current form, unless changed, the Affordable Care Act—or ObamaCare—will heighten the inequality the administration seeks to reduce.

The report also notes that ObamaCare "threatens the middle class with higher premiums, loss of hours, and a shift from part-time work and less comprehensive coverage."

I think those would be very troubling words to the President and his allies who passed the Affordable Care Act—or ObamaCare—but so far they have fallen on deaf ears.

Again, this report just in terms of its credibility was not issued by some Republican or conservative organization which was opposed to ObamaCare from the beginning. It was issued by a labor union which supported ObamaCare which has now found that what was promised has not actually been delivered in terms of its implication.

So what union members and their families are learning the hard way is the promise of ObamaCare is very different from the reality. We were promised ObamaCare would actually expand coverage, it would reduce costs, it would help our economy, all without disrupting existing health care arrangements.

In reality, the law has forced millions to lose their coverage and forced millions to pay higher premiums or higher deductibles, effectively being self-insured. Meanwhile, the Congressional Budget Office projects it will effectively shrink America's labor force by 2.5 million full-time workers over the next decade.

Remarkably, the administration now wants us to believe it is actually a good thing so many people are reducing their work hours in order to keep their

government-mandated health care. For example, chief White House economist Jason Furman has said working less to keep ObamaCare benefits "might be a better choice and a better option than what they had before."

Of course, they don't have a choice to keep what they had before because they have been forced into ObamaCare. If you don't buy the government-mandated insurance, then you are going to be fined by your friendly Federal Government.

But think about it: The White House chief economist is celebrating the possibility of a dramatic decline in American work hours. I would remind Mr. Furman that America's labor force participation is already at historic lows. It is as low as it has been for 30 years. In other words, the percentage of people looking for work in America is at a 30-year low already, and Mr. Furman is celebrating the further depressing impact of ObamaCare on work in America.

All else being equal, a reduction in work hours means a reduction in economic growth. It certainly means a reduction in income for the people working. We know a further reduction of economic growth will make it harder to create new jobs, improve living standards, and achieve broad-based prosperity—something I know we all hope for in America.

This is a dangerous cycle, and it is definitely not something we should be celebrating. It is something we should be fixing.

A truly compassionate agenda—not one that focuses on things which are largely irrelevant to the lives of Americans working families, but a truly compassionate agenda would seek to improve opportunity rather than encourage dependency. A truly compassionate agenda would place a much higher value on the dignity and self-reliance of American workers by making sure they have jobs.

For that matter, a truly compassionate agenda would aim to dismantle ObamaCare and replace it with patient-centered alternatives which encourage work and encourage job creation.

The type of agenda I have described is pretty much the exact opposite of what we have seen over the last 5 years, and the results speak for themselves. There is absolutely no reason we have to accept the status quo. With the right mix of economic policies, America can turn this ship around and restore the strong growth rates and robust job creation we enjoyed in the 1980s and 1990s. We will on this side of the aisle continue to promote such policies, and we look forward to working with our colleagues across the aisle when they finally come around to the realization the path we are heading on now is not one the American people are happy with or that they have to settle for.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

THE THREE ES

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I congratulate my colleague from Texas for his comments, and I agree with his concerns. These are the same concerns I hear at home in Wyoming.

I was in Buffalo, WY, at a health fair this past weekend. Hundreds of people from the community turned out. They have concerns about the health care law. They have concerns about their take-home pay. They have concerns about their jobs. And Wyoming is an energy State.

I am the only Republican Senator who is both on the energy committee as well as the Environment & Public Works Committee, and so I think about the three Es: energy security, economic growth, and environmental stewardship. We need energy security for our country, economic growth for our citizens, as well as to protect the environment and be good stewards of the land. I believe in Wyoming we continue to do all of those.

The American people have made it very clear that what they want from Washington is a focus on jobs and the economy. This is not what I have heard, though, over the last 24 hours from the Democrats on the other side of the aisle. The American people I talk to want us to make it easier for them to get back to work, to provide for their families, to get the kids back to school so they can go off to work. People's jobs are linked to their identity, to their dignity, to their self-worth. I think more of these regulations make it harder for people to have a job, to keep a job, and to provide for their families.

So we had an all-night talkathon, and what did it accomplish? To me, the only accomplishment was a waste of time and more hot air. It seemed to be a dog-and-pony show to satisfy their big liberal donors.

The majority leader spent part of the weekend in California with a big liberal donor who has promised \$100 million to the Democrats on the issue they decided to hold an entire night talkathon on. They had five or six Democratic Senators at this man's home in California basically saying: We want your money. We want your money. This is what the Democrats did.

So they put on an entire dog-and-pony show, showing that Democrats and their leadership—including the majority leader—is beholden to that liberal money that wants to call the tune for this Senate.

It is astonishing this would happen in the United States; that the majority leader of the Senate would take a number of Democratic Senators to California specifically to go to the home of somebody who says: I want to give \$100 million to promote what he said was his agenda—his agenda—and make the majority leader dance to that tune. This is what we saw for the last 24 hours.

The majority leader could call a vote tomorrow—he could call it today—on a

national energy tax. I think everybody on this side of the aisle is ready and prepared to vote on that. But for most of these folks, they wanted to just talk all night. They don't actually want to do anything. They just want to talk.

The Democrats control the agenda. They control the majority. They have changed the rules in terms of approving nominees. They have it all lined up.

It is astonishing that the most vulnerable Democrats who are running for office this year didn't show their faces last night. They wanted nothing at all to do with this.

So we hear about regulations which are going to crush jobs and make it harder for people to go to work. As a doctor having taken care of people who are out of work for a long time—and I am sure the Presiding Officer knows people like this as well—I know that being out of work impacts their identity, the way they view themselves, and their human dignity. In fact, it affects their health as well.

As a doctor, I have put together an entire report: "Red Tape Making Americans Sick," a report on the health impacts of high unemployment. Studies show EPA rules—the rules, regulations, and redtape—cost Americans not just their jobs but also their health.

For people who are chronically unemployed, we know there are higher rates of cancer, higher rates of suicide, higher rates of heart disease, higher rates of stroke, and higher rates of abuse—whether it is substance abuse, spousal abuse, child abuse. All of these add to hospital visits, premature deaths, all in communities where there is high joblessness. It is because of regulations which continue to come out of the EPA which are burdensome, which are expensive, which are time consuming. The costs are real, the benefits are theoretical, but yet this is what the Democrats on the other side of the aisle were talking about all night last night.

So I would say, instead of spending 24 hours on extreme regulations which result in a national energy tax, Democrats ought to be listening to the American people and focus on jobs and on the economy.

It is too bad Democrats would rather talk about a national energy tax for 24 hours than vote on the President's budget, a budget which never balances. Then vote on the Keystone XL Pipeline, a pipeline proposal which would bring, according to the State Department, 42,000 more individuals in our country into the workforce or even discuss and vote on other job proposals.

They don't want to talk about job creation ideas. I will continue to do so in terms of the Keystone Pipeline and in terms of exporting liquefied natural gas. We have an abundance in the United States which would be helpful to our economy, helpful to jobs, as well as helpful in our foreign policy as we work toward not just energy security but global security as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The Senator from South Dakota.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I want to compliment my colleagues from Wyoming and Texas for talking about the issues that are important to the American people. People in this country care about jobs and the economy. I think one of the reasons there were not more Democratic Senators down here last night is because a lot of them, as some pointed out, hit the snooze button, didn't want to come down here and talk about an issue which they realize ranked very low in people's assessment of what is really important in their daily lives. I think that is probably why most Americans, by and large, tuned out the all-night session we had on the floor.

We did have a number of Senate Democrats who came down and engaged in what they referred to as a talkathon on climate change. I don't know who coined the term "talkathon" to describe the event, but it is a perfect term. It really fits, since the event was all talk and no action.

In fact, writing ahead of the talkathon, USA Today noted, and I quote:

The Democratic effort is cause for some confusion, because these Senators are calling for action in a chamber they control, but without any specific legislation to offer up for a vote or any timetable for action this year.

Well, that is exactly right. Last night's filibuster was not designed to advance any legislation, nor was it a protest about the lack of legislation. After all, the Democrats control the Chamber and they can bring up a bill any time they want. Although last night's event may have had all the trappings of significant Senate action, it was nothing but talk.

If the Democrats really think government action on climate change is so important, one would assume last night they would have used it to debate a bill or try to persuade their leadership to bring one up on the floor. But they didn't, because it is an election year and Democrats are already deeply worried about their election prospects, and they know very well the American people do not like the climate change legislation they have offered up. The climate change bills Democrats have proposed almost invariably involve tax hikes that would drive the cost of energy sky high for ordinary families and kill jobs, all for extremely dubious environmental gains. The last time Congress debated the cap-and-trade bill was in 2009. That bill was estimated to destroy 2.5 million jobs. Perhaps that is why several Democrats who represent energy-producing States didn't make it to last night's talkathon. They must be tired of defending more job-destroying policies.

For families who are already struggling with reduced income and high

health care costs that have characterized the Obama economy for the past 5 years, increased energy prices and more job losses are the last thing they want to face. Democrats know that climate change legislation is a nonstarter in an election year, but they still have their radical environmental base to worry about, the same base that is pushing the President not to approve the Keystone Pipeline despite five separate environmental reviews that found its impact on the environment would be negligible.

Last night's talkathon, designed for maximum media exposure, allowed Democrats to assure their donors that they are focused on climate change without actually having to do anything, anything that would be difficult or politically damaging, such as going on the record and actually voting for a specific bill.

Last month Gallup released a poll on America's top concerns. Climate change didn't even make the top 10. Jobs and the economy, on the other hand, came in at the very top, not surprisingly. The American people have a very good assessment of what is important. Gallup polling shows that those two issues have been among Americans' top five concerns for most of the past 6 years. Despite this, however, Democrats have shown very little inclination to take real action on the economy. In fact, most of their policies are making our economic situation worse.

The policy that is doing the most economic damage is ObamaCare. Any way you look at it, ObamaCare means bad economic news for just about everybody. Millions of Americans have had the plans they like canceled, and far too many of them have found their ObamaCare alternative will cost more and offer them less.

Families around the country have enrolled in exchange plans that have left them wondering how they are going to be able to afford the plan's \$10,000 and \$12,000 deductibles. Low-income seniors enrolled in Medicare Advantage are wondering how they will afford the premium hikes and the benefit reductions that will soon hit them, thanks to ObamaCare's Medicare cuts. Eleven million small business workers are not sure how a bill that promised more affordable health care is actually raising—raising—their health care costs.

Then there are the businesses that are changing their plans to hire new workers because ObamaCare's mandates and fees mean they cannot afford to expand. The workers who are having their hours cut because ObamaCare means their employer cannot afford to keep them on as full-time workers. The Congressional Budget Office recently estimated ObamaCare will mean 2.5 million fewer full-time workers and approximately \$1 trillion in lower wages. That is a lot of lost economic opportunity.

But you do not have to take my word for it, because Republicans are not the only people who are worried about