

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

ObamaCare's effects on the economy and on the middle class. A lot of the President's allies are worried too. Democrats who are running in red States are running scared and are starting to talk about the need to amend the law.

And then there are the unions. Unions are, of course, historically Democratic supporters and they were instrumental in getting ObamaCare passed in the first place and helping to get the President reelected. Now unions are rethinking their support. At the end of last week UNITE HERE, which is a huge union with over one-quarter of a million members from all over the hospitality industry, published a white paper on ObamaCare which they called "The Irony of ObamaCare: Making Inequality Worse."

What does the document say? Well, it says what Republicans have been saying all along, that ObamaCare is going to make things much worse for the middle class. I want to quote from the first page:

Ironically, the administration's own signature healthcare victory poses one of the most immediate challenges to redressing inequality. . . . without smart fixes, the Affordable Care Act threatens the middle class with higher premiums, loss of hours, and a shift to part-time work and less comprehensive coverage.

That is from a white paper put out by one of the Nation's major unions. In 12 pages that document demolishes the administration's claim that the bill will help the middle class. It takes aim at the administration's ridiculous assertion that the law will not discourage business expansion or result in employers cutting hours. Worker hours, the union points out, have already been cut at nearly a third of U.S. franchise businesses.

Other businesses have chosen to replace full-time workers with part time workers, and still others have announced their intention of staying below 50 employees to avoid being hit by the worst of the law's mandates. The union also points out the likelihood of employers dumping employee health plans thanks to the law's requirements, leaving employees to obtain health care in the exchanges.

Here is what the union has to say about dropped employees, and again I quote:

For dropped employees, being pushed onto the exchanges will mean a major loss of income for health benefits. Families moving to the exchanges may lose between 4 percent and 25 percent of income to maintain equivalent benefits.

Again, that is from the union white paper on ObamaCare. Major loss of income or health benefits, families within the exchanges may lose between 4 and 25 percent of income—between 4 percent and 25 percent of income.

We are not talking about rich families here. We are talking about families who are making \$40,000 or \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year. Even a 4-percent income loss would make a huge dent in these

families' budgets. A 25-percent income loss for a family making that amount of money would be devastating.

Finally, the union concludes by pointing out a study in the Brookings Institution—again, not exactly a bastion of conservatism—that shows that those making below \$25,000 will get some benefit of the Affordable Care Act. But those right above them, families with incomes of \$20,000 to \$38,000, will lose income. "Only in Washington," the report concludes, "could asking the bottom of the middle class to finance health care for the poorest families be seen as reducing inequality."

Again, that is a quote from that report by UNITE HERE labor union.

I want to remind everyone this is not a Republican document. It is a document produced by some of President Obama's biggest supporters. In fact, UNITE HERE was actually the first union to endorse then-Senator Obama in 2008. So this isn't an organization seeking to damage the President politically or to provide Republicans with talking points. But like so many Americans around the country, UNITE HERE has been forced to an inescapable conclusion, and that conclusion is that ObamaCare just isn't working. It is doing the opposite of what it was intended to do. It is making health care more expensive for families. It is discouraging employees from hiring. It is reducing Americans' health care choices.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent for an additional minute.

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

Mr. THUNE. It is reducing Americans' health care choices, and it is encouraging employers to cut hours and benefits. Our health care system may have needed reform, but this was not the way to do it. Even the President's strongest supporters are having buyers' remorse, and a lot of Americans are hurting right now thanks to the President's health care law.

As we hear from more Americans, South Dakotans, people all across this country, who are struggling under the law, I hope the Democrats here who I believe privately are rethinking their vote for this law will have the courage to publicly join us in calling for its repeal.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

ENERGY

Mr. HOEVEN. Thank you, Madam President.

Last night the majority party had an all-night session talking about energy, but there is no specific proposal coming forward. We are here ready to vote to do our job representing the American people and actually craft a plan, a comprehensive energy plan for this country that works.

Since we didn't hear one last night, I thought I would come today and pro-

pose one. I would like to propose a States-first all-of-the-above energy plan. This isn't new. This is a plan I proposed along with others, my good colleague from South Dakota, my good colleague from Wyoming who was just here, and others. This is a comprehensive approach, a bipartisan approach, and actually specific legislation, a number of bills that will create a comprehensive plan to not only produce more energy for our country but to create more jobs, to grow our economy, to help expand our tax base, so we can reduce the deficit and the debt without raising taxes and, maybe most importantly of all, actually providing national security so we do not have to import oil from the Middle East—a specific action plan with legislation drafted and introduced that, instead of talking about it here on the Senate floor, let's do it. Let's start voting. Let's pass it. Let's put solutions in place for the American people.

Now this is not one big monolithic one-size-fits-all Federal plan, Federal approach. Instead, it is a series of bills sponsored, as I say, by Members on both sides of the aisle that would truly create a States-first, all-of-the-above energy approach. It includes measures such as my good colleague from South Dakota just said. Let's approve the Keystone Pipeline. The administration has been working on it for 5 years. Maybe they are going to work on it for another 5 years. I don't know. Well, let's approve it here in Congress. Let's act.

Another bill, the Dominion Energy and Jobs Act, is a bill I introduced that has already been passed by the House. It is a series of 13 different pieces of legislation that would help us produce more energy in this country both onshore and off.

The Empower States Act is another piece of legislation I put forward that would address hydraulic fracturing which is unleashing new areas of energy production in our country, or the coal ash recycling bill, that not only would help us recycle coal ash, but provide better standards to make sure that we are storing ash that is recycled in environmentally sound ways, addressing a problem that EPA is working on, and has to come up with a solution by the end of the year. We work with the EPA to come up with a commonsense solution that also encourages recycling coal ash to use on highways and buildings and other construction, and for other construction purposes. There is the Domestic Fuels Act, which is another piece of legislation that not only helps us market traditional fuels at the pump, such as traditional oil and gas products, but also renewable fuels, such as biofuels, biodiesel, ethanol, hydrogen, other types of energy that we are working to develop—renewable fuels. Let's make it easier to give consumers choice at the pump and more competition that will help reduce their costs.

This is the same kind of comprehensive plan that we developed in North