

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

FORT HOOD SHOOTING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, last week the men and women at the Fort Hood Army post in Killeen, TX, witnessed a shocking act of violence as a gunman suddenly and inexplicably opened fire, killing 3 fellow soldiers and wounding 16 others. Yet, even as our attention has focused on the horror of this event, I think it is also important to talk about the very best of humanity demonstrated during this time of tragedy and crisis.

The men and women at Fort Hood saw the very best of humanity in the military police officer who confronted the shooter, for example.

They saw it in Private Jacob Sanders, who risked his own life in the hopes of saving one of the victims.

They saw it in SGT Jonathan Westbrook, who was shot and wounded by the gunman but still managed to radio Fort Hood officials and sound the alert so that others might be protected and safe.

They also saw it in SFC Danny Ferguson, who served a combat tour in Iraq and had recently gotten home from a second one in Afghanistan. Last Wednesday Sergeant Ferguson used his own body to prevent the shooter from entering a crowded room. He gave his life so that his fellow soldiers could keep theirs. He showed the kind of heroism that few of us could even imagine, the kind of heroism that defines our men and women in uniform.

So even as we mourn the terrible loss of Sergeant Ferguson, we want to also take a moment to celebrate his wonderful example and his wonderful life, just as we celebrate the remarkable lives of SGT Timothy Owens and SSG Carlos Lazaney-Rodriguez.

Sergeant Owens served his country in Iraq and in Kuwait. He also served as a counselor at Fort Hood. According to his mother, he counseled literally "hundreds of people." His brother Darrell described him as someone who "would help anybody who needed help."

Sergeant Lazaney-Rodriguez was a native of Puerto Rico, and he served multiple combat tours in Iraq. He too made a distinct impression on his friends and fellow soldiers at Fort Hood. One of them described him as "the epitome of what you want a leader to be in the Army."

As I mentioned a moment ago, as we mourn the loss of Sergeant Ferguson, Sergeant Owens, and Sergeant Lazaney-Rodriguez, we should take a moment to celebrate their lives and their service. All three of these men chose—they volunteered—to devote their lives to a noble cause—the defense of our country—and our memories of their work and their sacrifice will live forever.

Before I conclude, I wish to say one more word about Fort Hood, where I will be traveling to tomorrow with the President. Fort Hood is also known as The Great Place. They call it The Great Place. I had the honor of visiting the post last Thursday, and I will do so again tomorrow for the memorial, as I said. As we all remember, Fort Hood was also the scene of an earlier mass shooting in November of 2009. That was yet another day where we saw both the worst and the best of humanity. We saw the very best of humanity in people such as Michael Cahill, a civilian physician's assistant and retired soldier, and Army CPT John Gaffaney, both of whom charged the gunman—MAJ Nidal Hasan—and gave their lives in order to save the lives of others around them.

Over the last 13 years, the Fort Hood community has made enormous contributions to America's missions in Iraq and in Afghanistan, where more than 550 of their soldiers have made the ultimate sacrifice. In fact, the last combat brigade to leave Iraq was a Fort Hood brigade—the Third Brigade of the storied 1st Cavalry Division.

I sometimes think about the fact that most Americans probably don't have a close friend or relative who has served in the Armed Forces. So in some ways the American people have become isolated to some degree from the realities of war and national security. For them the war in Afghanistan is something they read about in the newspaper or they hear about on TV, but it is not very real to them unless they have a family member or a loved one or a friend who has served.

For the families at Fort Hood and in the surrounding Texas communities of Belton, Copperas Cove, Harker Heights, Killeen, and Temple, it is something much different, something much more personal because it is a family member, it is a loved one, it is a friend who has served, and many of them have lost their lives in the process because they believed that keeping the American people safe was more important than their own personal security and safety.

I wish to take this moment to let the families and friends of the victims at Fort Hood know that—and, indeed, to tell all the good people at Fort Hood—your fellow Americans are thinking about you, we are praying for you and keeping you close in our hearts during this difficult time.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UCONN VICTORY

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I want to begin by remarking on the ex-

traordinary and remarkable triumph of the UConn men's basketball team last night—a victory that is beyond my words to describe—and the achievement it represents for those players, for the school, for coach Kevin Ollie, and for the entire university, particularly in the face of last year's disqualification—unfair and unjustified, in my view.

I am so proud of our team and the University of Connecticut for its steadfast and relentless pursuit of this national championship, which last night culminated in a huge and joyous triumph felt throughout Connecticut and, in fact, throughout the country.

I will be commenting in greater length and depth on how this achievement reflects on the University of Connecticut, what it means to college athletics, and what lessons we can take from this great triumph.

In the meantime, I am wearing my University of Connecticut tie with the emblem of the Huskies because last night's triumph is only a prelude to tonight.

UConn is rolling with momentum toward two national championships. The women, I believe, will prevail tonight, and I expect to collect on another debt—the debt owed to me already by my colleagues from Kentucky I think will be supplemented tomorrow—and I will ask that my Kentucky colleague, Senator PAUL, wear this tie, if only for a brief moment, to demonstrate who was the better team last night. They are both great teams, but Connecticut was the greatest.

PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am here this morning on a very serious and important subject—the Paycheck Fairness Act. I thank my colleagues who were with me earlier today at an event we attended. The President is doing an event right now. He has announced he will require all Federal contractors to follow the rule that there should be no retaliation against people in the workplace who share information about their pay. It sounds like a basic principle of fairness but, unfortunately, the law has gaps that permit discrimination—gender discrimination, unequal pay for the same work. So today on Equal Pay Day, I am here to advocate for the Paycheck Fairness Act, which will help fill some of those gaps.

This issue is not a man's issue, it is not a woman's issue. It is a family issue. It is not about women, it is about paycheck fairness. So it is as much about men as it is about women. Right now 40 percent of all our families are supported by women either as the sole or primary breadwinner. That means the children in those families, and the men, depend on that income and on the fairness of their paychecks to keep a roof over their head and to keep food on the table.

Paycheck fairness is about a fair shot—a fair shot for every woman and

every person in American society. It is part of a larger agenda which includes raising the minimum wage, which we still have to do, and restoring unemployment insurance, which the Senate did yesterday but we still have to do in the House. That larger agenda about a fair shot goes to the core of the American conscience about what is right, but it also happens to be what is economically smart. Paying women equal to men for the same work means that women will come to jobs and they will work better in those jobs, more productively. Women have so much to contribute in jobs where they serve equally or better than men.

Unfortunately, the promise of the Equal Pay Act, signed in 1963 by President Kennedy, has yet to be achieved. That promise was that equality would prevail in the workplace. Yet 51 years later the disparities are glaring, the gaps between gender pay are unacceptable and inexcusable. Women make only 77 percent of every dollar earned by men. The disparity is even greater in certain professions. In the janitorial profession, among supervisors, and among CEOs, women make 70 cents or less on the dollar. The same is true among financial advisers and among product inspectors. So the disparities cut across all professions. In fact, in 97 percent of all professions, women make less on average than men. That is why we must work to change the law.

The Paycheck Fairness Act would accomplish a number of very simple straightforward goals. No. 1, it would enable workers to share information without fear of retaliation. Right now, a worker can be fired or demoted if he or she shares information about what they are making. The Lilly Ledbetter Act of 2009 advanced these goals and made some progress, but this threat of retaliation is real and completely unconscionable and it should be directly prohibited by law.

Second, the burden should be on the employer to establish that pay disparities are business related or job specific. Those disparities ought to be the job of the employer to justify, not the employee. After all, it is not the employee who makes those decisions, it is the employer. So the employer ought to be the one to present a justification based on objective and real business-related or job-specific factors.

Finally, the Paycheck Fairness Act provides for punitive damages. Only by establishing punitive damages can the evil and harm done by pay discrimination be effectively deterred. The economic penalty will discourage employers by providing real consequences for their discrimination.

This issue is really an American issue that has resonance coast to coast, job to job, and person to person, but mostly it has resonance among families. The estimates are that eliminating the gender pay gap will reduce poverty among families headed by single working mothers from 28.7 percent to 15 percent. It will reduce poverty,

most importantly, among children. It will give those children a leg up that they lack now. It will give their moms a sense of justified dignity and self-respect. It will make a practical difference in the lives of families, raising the self-respect and dignity of men as well as women. If they are the beneficiaries of false factors, simple gender discrimination, how can they justify the additional pay that they as men make?

Discovering and proving discrimination is a formidable, daunting, sometimes insurmountable challenge. Discovering it is difficult enough. That is why sharing of information is necessary. Proving it is sometimes virtually impossible without the kind of law the Paycheck Fairness Act will provide, the rights and making those rights real that can be achieved, ending systemic pay discrimination that undermines and disservices our entire society. It demeans all of us. It fails to give people a fair shot when that is the ethos, the core conscience of American economic profit. A fair shot is not only fair, it is smart. It will promote jobs and economic growth, which all of us deeply want and deserve.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). Without objection, it is so ordered.

POLITICAL STRATEGY

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, 2 weeks ago the New York Times published an article on the congressional Democrats' plan for the rest of the year. It boiled down to one thing: Campaigning. That is right; 8 months out from the election, Democrats in Congress have given up on legislating. Instead, they are going to spend the next 8 months focused on show votes, which will—and I quote from the story—“be timed to coincide with campaign-style trips by President Obama.”

While these votes will focus on “pocketbook issues” Democrats hope will appeal to voters, the votes are not designed to actually accomplish anything. The New York Times goes on to say:

Democrats concede that making new laws is not really the point. Rather, they are trying to force Republicans to vote against them.

The article goes on to say:

Privately, White House officials say they have no intention of searching for any grand bargain with Republicans on any of these issues. “The point isn’t to compromise,” a senior White House official said.

So that is where we are. The economy is stagnant, unemployment is hovering at recession-level highs, 10 mil-

lion Americans are unemployed—nearly 4 million of them for 6 months or longer—household income has fallen, health care costs are soaring, and Democrats have decided to give up doing anything about it so they can get reelected in November.

This political strategy was front and center last week when Democrats blocked all Republican amendments during the Senate debate of the employment benefits extension bill. Republicans wanted to offer a number of amendments that were focused specifically on job creation. After all, the only reason we are considering extending unemployment benefits for the 13th time since 2008 is because so many Americans still don’t have jobs. While unemployment benefits can provide limited short-term help, they do nothing to get unemployed Americans what they really want—steady, good-paying jobs with an opportunity for advancement.

Republicans thought that we should accompany yet another extension of emergency unemployment benefits with measures to make it easier and cheaper to create jobs for the millions of Americans currently searching for work. We proposed amendments to create jobs with measures such as reining in burdensome regulatory requirements and improving job training for people who are unemployed. Democrats, however, didn’t want to take any votes on Republican proposals, so they simply refused to allow amendments to be considered. That is not the mark of a party that is serious about helping the unemployed.

If Democrats were really serious, they would be focused on permanent relief through jobs rather than merely treating the symptoms of unemployment. Democrats brought up unemployment benefits not because they offer real, long-term help to the unemployed but because they think these benefits might win them a few votes in November.

They are planning to keep on doing the same thing. Soon Democrats plan to bring up a 40-percent minimum wage hike that the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates will cost up to 500,000 jobs by the end of 2016. By the way, 57 percent of those job losses—according to the CBO—would be held by women. But that is not stopping the Democrats who hope that a minimum wage hike will gain them votes at the polls even if it hurts workers in the process.

This week Senator REID filed cloture on the motion to proceed to a similarly political bill, the so-called Paycheck Fairness Act. All Senate Republicans believe in equal pay for equal work. Paycheck fairness has been the law of the land since 1963. Democrats are playing politics with equal pay and attempting to distract from the real harm that their policies have done to women. Right now there are 3.7 million more women living in poverty than there were when the President took office. Since the President took office,