

In addition, the U.S. labor force participation rate is at its lowest point in 36 years. Not since the days of Jimmy Carter has such a low percentage of Americans been in the workforce.

In fact, another shocking headline: Over 800,000 Americans dropped out of the labor force last month alone. Let me say that again. Over 800,000 Americans dropped out of the labor force in just 1 month—800,000. That is enough people to fill Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, home of Super Bowl XLVI and the Indianapolis Colts, one dozen times.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics calls many of these 800,000 “discouraged workers,” and they join over one-third of all working-age Americans no longer seeking work. It is not only those who are earnestly out there every day trying to find a job, any job, this is a staggering number of people who have simply given up, saying: It is not worth the effort; I can’t find a job; the jobs simply are not there.

Even those young Americans starting their careers, just entering the workforce, are not entering at the traditional level, the level which they are qualified for, have trained for or have been educated for. They are being forced to accept positions that they are overqualified for at wages way below what they expected to make after all their efforts preparing themselves through education and skills training to join the labor force in America.

Given years of growth at half the expected level and high unemployment, it is not surprising but it is very disheartening to hear this news continue well into the fifth year after the recession. But rather than point fingers or assign blame, I am here today to seek, hopefully, a consensus that the Senate needs to propose, needs to debate, and needs to support measures that will increase economic growth and provide economic opportunity for those who are seeking to join the labor force.

It is time for us to start talking about maximizing opportunity. Webster’s dictionary defines opportunity as “a good chance for advancement or progress.” That is what American workers at all levels of skill and income deserve, but many of us have introduced our own ideas about job creation and economic growth.

Earlier this year I put forward a detailed 10-point plan that I call The Indiana Way. Based on stories and suggestions from Hoosiers, these are commonsense solutions to some of our Nation’s biggest problems. Many of my proposals incorporate ideas that have gained bipartisan support.

We are not in the Senate arguing against each other, we are trying to find solutions, proposals, to debate together, to support together, and to move this country forward.

The Indiana Way includes commonsense proposals to reform our broken Tax Code, reduce regulations that are crippling industries and business, unlock American energy sources, and

support community banks, credit unions, and those who are providing the tools for investment and the tools for growth.

I welcome the chance to discuss how these ideas will help Hoosiers and Americans who are struggling in this economy, and I know many of my colleagues are also eager for the opportunity to discuss and debate real solutions to help our workforce. There are a number of proposals that have been brought to this floor by my colleagues.

Senator PORTMAN, who sits at a desk next to me, and others have put forward meaningful proposals we ought to be debating. We shouldn’t be talking about: Well, nothing is going to get done because it is an election year.

We ought to set that aside and say for the sake of the future of this country and for all of those seeking work and don’t have it, let’s debate the real issues. Let’s work together to pass something that will make our country stronger and our economy better.

It was one of my former colleagues and friend Jack Kemp who once said:

Our goals for this nation must be nothing less than to double the size of our economy and bring prosperity and jobs, ownership and equality of opportunity to all Americans, especially those living in our nation’s pockets of poverty—

And especially those who are earnestly seeking work and simply can’t find it. Today that goal remains worthy of our time and efforts. Let’s join together and have a conversation about real solutions that will make our country stronger, improve the lives of all American citizens, and build a better future for the next generation. This should be our goal. This is the goal that should unite us, and it is long past time for us to get serious about it and take action.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

ENERGY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, all year I have been coming to the floor to urge Senate Democrats to work with us to help the middle class. So far they haven’t seemed too serious about it. We saw that last week when they insisted on pushing legislation that could cost—not create but cost—up to 1 million jobs. Seventeen thousand of those jobs would be lost in Kentucky alone.

I am hoping Senate Democrats are finally willing to turn the page. I am

hoping they are finally willing to get serious about helping the middle class, because if they are, here is the energy debate we should be having right here this week: We should be having a debate about how to develop policies that can actually lead to lower utility bills for squeezed families, policies that can put people back to work in America’s coal country, policies that can help the kind of well-paying jobs our constituents want and deserve, and policies that can lead to a more effective use of North American energy supplies, that can help stabilize the world at a time when energy has become a weapon of states that do not hold our interests at heart.

Middle-class Americans struggle every day just to make ends meet. For many, the rising cost of energy is a big part of that. The price of electricity has been rising over the last decade, jumping by double digits in many States, and that is even after adjusting for inflation.

So it is unacceptable that it has been 7 years since we have had a real debate about energy jobs, energy independence, and energy security in the Democratically led Senate.

Republicans have a lot of good ideas about ways to help alleviate pressure on the middle class, and we have good ideas about how to create new opportunities through the use of our country’s abundant energy supplies. I am sure our Democratic friends have some good ideas, too, and we would all love to hear them because these days we haven’t heard a lot of serious energy talk from our friends on the other side.

We haven’t heard many concrete Democratic proposals that would effectively alleviate the real concerns and anxieties and stresses that my constituents and theirs deal with on an everyday basis. That is what we would like to hear from them this week, and that is what the American people deserve to hear.

We know Washington Democrats tried and failed to push a national energy tax—cap and trade—through Congress back when they had complete control of Washington. We know President Obama hasn’t given up on that idea, even after the people’s representatives refused to go along with it—in a Congress that was controlled entirely by his party.

That is why we see the Obama administration trying to do an end run around Congress to get what it wants: to impose through the bureaucracy massive new regulations that would make things even harder for already squeezed middle-class families.

So what Republicans are saying is this: Our constituents deserve a voice in what Washington Democrats are planning to do up because they are the ones whose lives and livelihoods will be most affected by these decisions, and through legislation this very week our constituents should be able to weigh in on these kinds of Democratic plans.

For instance, my constituents in Kentucky should be able to weigh in on

an EPA rule that would negatively impact existing and future coal plants. Kentuckians deserve a say on ongoing regulatory efforts to tie up mining permits and the redtape that is stifling the creation of good jobs in the coal industry and coal country.

The American people deserve a debate on how we can best tap our own extraordinary natural resources to achieve energy independence here at home and how we can help our allies overseas through increased exports of American energy too.

These are what we should be voting on this very week—serious energy policy proposals that can jolt our economy, boost middle-class incomes and jobs, and improve America's energy security in the world.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

GUN CONTROL

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, Dinyal New was sitting in her church in Oakland, CA, and she was asked a question which she repeated back knowing there was no way to answer it. She said: What is it like to bury both of my kids?

Ms. New lost her two sons in episodes of gun violence not more than 3 weeks apart in January of this year.

Her youngest son was an eighth grader. He was walking down the street one day. The description says that surveillance cameras actually show him almost skipping down the street. He was walking home from the bus stop. He usually called his mom to pick him up, but his cell phone battery had died that day. On the video we can see a gunman approach carrying a semi-automatic rifle and shoot little Lee, an eighth grader, 28 times.

He wasn't in a gang. Frankly, it shouldn't matter whether he was in a gang, but he wasn't in a gang. He loved to play drums. His neighbors said he was a great kid. He stayed home a lot playing video games or he hung out often at the Boys and Girls Club while his single mom worked as a social worker. Nobody knows why Lee was targeted.

After Lee died, his mom begged his older brother Lamar to leave town, that it was just too dangerous. Not knowing exactly what went on, she didn't want Lamar to get caught in the crossfire. Lamar had had a little more difficult life, but he had straightened out his life after some occasional run-ins with the law. He was taking classes at a local community college, and he had dreams of becoming a musician or starting his own business, but 3 days after his little brother's funeral, on

January 19 his mom asked Lamar to run an errand for him. So being a dutiful son, just days after the family was grieving at his brother's funeral, he went 2 blocks from home to do an errand. He was in his car and a suspect got up on top of the car and started shooting into it, killing Lamar. Within 3 weeks she had gone from having two sons to having no sons. Those two homicides are among the 31,672 that happen annually through gunfire and gun violence all across the Nation, part of 2,639 gun deaths every month, part of the 86 a day that happen all across the country. My State is no exception. In March of this year on the same night, March 24, two half-brothers were shot, leaving one dead and the other in the hospital. The surviving brother was a student at Hamden High School and the principal there talked about the fact that this is now the eighth shooting victim at Hamden High School in the principal's short tenure there. Hamden is not a town that is known in Connecticut for high rates of violence, but in just that one high school alone this one principal has seen eight shooting victims.

They had the funeral which was attended by hundreds for Taijhon. Taijhon was a great kid. All kids have troubles, but Taijhon was trying to get his life straight. He had just enrolled in the New Haven Job Corps Program. Anyone who knows about Job Corps program knows it is an avenue to get kids' lives turned around, gives them real skills that they can go out and succeed. Taijhon was enthusiastic about having started this Job Corps Program, but now we will have no idea what Taijhon's life was going to be like because he is not with us any longer, and his half-brother—who was initially in critical condition—his life will be changed forever.

The funeral for Taijhon was especially poignant because for the family this was just the latest tragedy. Two of Taijhon's cousins, Dallas and TJ, were also shot to death in New Haven. So in cities such as New Haven and Oakland, the misery is cascading because it is not just one death with family members of that immediate family affected, it is multiple brothers, it is brothers and cousins, it is entire families being targeted and sometimes wiped out by this epidemic of gun violence—an epidemic of gun violence that this body refuses to do anything about.

As you know, I try to come down to the floor every week, if I can, to give some voices to the victims of gun violence, because if these statistics will not move this place to action, maybe the stories of those young men and women—but mainly young men who are dying all across this country due to gun violence—maybe it is their stories that will move us to take some action. I know we couldn't get the 60 votes required to pass an expansion of background checks in this Senate, but maybe there is something else we can do.

Maybe we can lend more mental health resources to these cities that are struggling to keep up with these high rates of gun violence. Maybe we can fix the existing background check system to ensure that the right records get loaded in and there is actual enforcement of gun dealers who aren't actually asking their customers to go through background checks. Maybe there is something we can do on a bipartisan basis, but the reality is a lot of States are moving in the opposite direction.

Recently there was a lot of attention on a piece of legislation that passed in Georgia. This bill was dubbed the most extreme gun bill in America. It allowed people to carry weapons in bars, in government buildings, in places of worship, in school safety zones, at school functions, on school-provided transportation, all apparently under the theory that if we make enough guns available out in the public to both good guys and bad guys, hopefully, through a process of gun control Darwinism, the good guys will eventually shoot the bad guys.

The problem is that is not how it works. All of the data and evidence tells us that exactly the opposite occurs when you flood a community with guns and that more people die, not less. We don't know all of the reasons why a 19-year-old FedEx package handler walked into a facility in Kennesaw, GA, and injured six people before killing himself, but what we do know is that town has a law on the books that requires every single head of household to own a firearm. Kennesaw, GA, has a law on the books requiring every head of household to own a firearm. That didn't stop the episode of mass violence from happening inside of that FedEx facility. More guns does not equal safer communities in the end.

In my community of Newtown, Adam Lanza's mother had guns in the house because she thought it would help protect herself and her son who lived alone in the house. In the end it didn't help. It got her killed and it got 20 people killed as well.

Think about what it would be like to be a 7-year-old girl waking in the middle of the night, with your 2- and 4- and 5-year-old siblings still sleeping in the house, and walking into the living room and finding your mother and father dead. That is what happened just about 2 weeks ago in Memphis, TN, when a 7-year-old girl awoke to find that both of her parents had been shot and killed in the living room. Three other kids were home at the time. The 7-year-old then called the police who responded and identified the victims.

James Alexander, her father, was described as a landscaper and a great father. Her mother was described as athletic and very protective of her children. Her parents were junior high school sweethearts and they had just married in February. One hundred people packed the corner Friday evening