

For parents worried about failing schools for their children, Senator KIRK introduced the Expanding Opportunity Through Quality Charter Schools Act—a bill that would provide more and better educational choices and some much needed compensation for teachers unions that too often put their own interests above those of our children.

Then there is the National Right to Work Act, a bill I cosponsored with Senator PAUL, which will eliminate a Federal rule that requires employees of certain companies to join a union or pay union dues whether they want to or not. Lifting this rule would vastly increase job opportunities in my State for women and men who want to work but can't find it, especially in the area of manufacturing.

The senior Senator from Maine has a proposal that would repeal a senseless provision in ObamaCare that is incentivizing employers all across the country to limit their employees to 30 hours a week.

The junior Senator from Nebraska has a bill—the Workplace Advancement Act—that would further equip women in the workplace with the knowledge and tools they need to fight employer discrimination.

The junior Senator from Florida has a bill—the RAISE Act—that would amend the National Labor Relations Act to allow employers to give merit-based pay increases to employees who are currently prohibited from receiving them because of outdated labor rules, and the junior Senator from Utah has a number of good proposals in a variety of areas.

These are just a few of the very good ideas that Members of my conference have put together to address the concerns and anxieties of working men and women whose wages have remained stubbornly flat during the Obama years, even as the cost of everything from college tuition to health care continues to soar. There are many others, including bills passed by the House that the Democratic majority in the Senate continues to block.

I am very proud of the work so many of my colleagues have done in putting all this legislation together. This morning some of us will present a number of these ideas at a press conference to draw attention to the urgent needs of our constituents and the short-sightedness of the majority leader in blocking our ideas to address them. Every one of these Republican ideas is meant to address some common concern of working families in our country, but none of them ever get a vote because it would not fit the story line Washington Democrats are peddling.

Apparently Senate Democrats would rather people didn't know Republicans have been working overtime behind the scenes to make their lives easier or paychecks bigger for working moms and recent college graduates. They would rather people didn't even know about these or dozens of other ideas we

have that are aimed at making life a little easier for middle-class Americans, because if they did, they might realize there is an entirely different approach to the problems that have been plaguing this economy for years now and choose it over theirs.

What Republicans have been saying is that there are a number of things we can do right now to help folks deal with the pressures they face every day in this economy. We have been talking about these ideas for years, and we will be talking about them later today because 5½ years into the Obama economy Americans are eager for some fresh thinking. They are tired of the same old big government solutions that only make life harder and more complicated. They are tired of a Democratically controlled Senate that will not allow a debate or a vote on any of our better proposals.

Most of our constituents are thinking about long commutes, shrinking budgets, obscenely high tuition and health care bills. They think about how nice it would be to have some more flexibility at work. They are frustrated with a Tax Code that seems to punish their efforts to make a little bit more money for their family, and they are not getting anything from the White House but empty rhetoric and more of the same.

Today Republicans are reminding people there is another way. While Democrats have been plotting ways to hold on to their majority, we have been listening to the concerns and anxieties of our constituents and figuring out new, creative ways to address them.

It is long past time we had a real debate in this country, instead of the false choice Democrats constantly present to the public between their own failed ideas and some political villain that doesn't exist. It is time Americans saw the real choice before them, and once they do, I think the choice will be an easy one.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

##### MASTER SERGEANT AARON C. TORIAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning I wish to commemorate the life and service of a brave U.S. marine from Paducah, KY, MSgt Aaron C. Torian. This highly accomplished marine was tragically killed on February 15, 2014, from injuries sustained during combat training operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. He was 36 years old.

For his service in uniform, Master Sergeant Torian received many medals, awards, and decorations—including the Purple Heart, the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device, the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, the Combat Action Ribbon with Gold Star, the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon with three stars, the Global War on Terrorism Ex-

peditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, and the Good Conduct Medal.

When he was 28, Master Sergeant Torian was named the Second Marine Division's Noncommissioned Officer of the Year. It is a high honor. This distinction recognizes marines who excel in physical fitness, leadership skills, and tactical and technical proficiency. Receiving it made Aaron a role model for hundreds of NCOs in the Second Marine Division.

At the time he won the award, he simply said:

I had to step up. I just figured that this is what I'd joined the Marine Corps to do, and so I always did it 100 percent.

"His work ethic was remarkable," says Aaron's mother Esta Smith. She said:

He was a warrior as a marine. . . . He ultimately gave everything for his country and he never put himself anything but last. He gave everything because he loved his country.

Born in 1977, Aaron was a native of Paducah and grew up in the region before his family moved to Maryland. Aaron graduated from Thomas Stone High School in Waldorf, MD, where he was a star athlete in baseball and football. He was awarded a football scholarship to the University of Tennessee at Martin, where he graduated in 2001. Aaron then went on to earn a master's degree in instructional leadership at Tennessee Tech in 2003.

Aaron's time at Tennessee Tech was notable for a few other reasons besides his degree. He worked as a graduate assistant football coach, and he also met the woman who would become his wife, Jurley Pomeroy. Together the couple had three children.

"He was a great dad and always everything his children needed him to be," says his wife Jurley. "When he got off the plane, being the best dad and best husband was his number-one priority."

Aaron joined the Marine Corps in 2003 and promoted to Master Sergeant in September of 2013. In addition to being a wonderful father and husband and an exemplary marine, he was a faithful member of College Acres Baptist Church in Wilmington, NC. He was a community volunteer for his local college baseball grounds crew and also at the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church annual Greek festival.

Aaron's mother said:

Aaron held on to the thing he believed in: faith, love, and freedom. . . . The conversation was always about how blessed he felt and how he thanked God for his beautiful family. Humility was the definition of Aaron.

Aaron's final deployment was his sixth in total. He served two tours in Iraq and four in Afghanistan. At the time of his final deployment, he was assigned to the Second Marine Special Operations Battalion, Marine Special Operations Regiment, U.S. Marine

Corps Forces Special Operations Command based out of Camp Lejeune, NC.

In late February of this year, Master Sergeant Torian was laid to rest with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery. Just last month at the Memorial Day ceremonies in Aaron's native McCracken County, KY, county officials unveiled a commemorative street sign for MSgt Aaron C. Torian. For 1 year it will be displayed in front of the county courthouse and then placed permanently at a location of his family members' choosing.

"Thank God for the blessing and honor of allowing me to be your mom," says Aaron's mother Esta. "Semper Fi—always faithful. My son, you are a true American hero."

We are thinking of Aaron's family today as I share his story with my Senate colleagues, including his wife Jurley, his children Elijah, Laura Bella, and Avery, his mother and stepfather Esta and Jim Smith, his father Joe Torian, and many other beloved family members and friends.

I want the family of MSgt Aaron C. Torian to know that just as his life of dedication and service is recognized at the McCracken County Courthouse and in the hallowed shrine of Arlington, so too it is recognized in the Senate.

I know all of my colleagues join me in solemn reverence and gratitude for this brave young man's willingness to pledge everything for our country. We honor his supreme sacrifice on behalf of all Americans.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 4660.

The clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 428, H.R. 4660, a bill making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, we bring to the floor our fiscal year 2015 spending bill, but before the Republican leader leaves, as the Senator from Maryland, I too would like to join with great respect in condolences for Master Sergeant Torian's family. For all of us who are Senators who have constituent families where people have died, we have to be in this together.

These are times when we are not the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. We are not red or blue. We have to be red, white, and blue. From this

side of the aisle to that side of the aisle, Godspeed to his family, and I thank the Senator for bringing this wonderful young man to the attention of the Senate. Those remarks were quite poignant and moving.

We have to stand by those families—the widow, the children who will need an education, and let's do it shoulder to shoulder.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Maryland for her additional comments about this wonderful young man.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, today we bring to the floor on a bipartisan basis the annual appropriation bills of the Commerce-Justice-Science bill, the Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and also the Agriculture, Rural Development, and Food and Drug Administration. I wish to thank all of the members of the Appropriations Committee for their tremendous work on these bills. First, I wish to say a special word about my vice chairman RICHARD SHELBY, who has done the hard work and the due diligence of helping move the entire process but also moving, in particular, our bill that funds the Commerce Department, Justice Department, and the science programs, such as our space program.

In terms of transportation, we have the able leadership of Senator MURRAY, with her vice chairman Senator COLLINS; and on agriculture, chairman MARK PRYOR and, again, his vice chairman ROY BLUNT.

This process is about moving America forward. This legislation we are putting before the Senate today puts America's middle-class families first, creating opportunity by creating jobs today.

With investments in physical infrastructure in the transportation and housing bill, we are building roads and bridges, repairing them, and updating transit lines and rail lines, so we literally and figuratively can keep America on the move. At the same time we are also meeting America's compelling human needs with our investment in home ownership as well as in housing and in urban and economic development.

We also create jobs tomorrow with investments in research and discovery. What we do in these important science agencies is drive innovation, leading to new products and new jobs. And guess what. Science saves lives.

When we look at Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations, we see that we fund the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—a lot of words with a lot of alphabet, synonyms and acronyms and so on.

At the end of the day, we fund the weather service. What does the weather service do? They predict weather. They predict immediate weather, such as is it going to rain this afternoon, and they predict weather emergencies, whether we are going to have a tornado.

Our hearts go out, again, on the other side of the aisle, to the people of Kansas, where they were hit by a double tornado—an unprecedented weather event. They are calling it the twin sisters, referring to what happened in Nebraska. They were the ugly sisters, but they were made less ugly because of the way the weather service could help alert the people in that community. That is what we fund.

We protect the American people by making sure we fight crime and terrorism by funding Federal law enforcement; by making sure our medicines and medical devices are safe by funding the Food and Drug Administration; and we meet compelling human needs, whether we are talking about affordable housing or affordable food.

While we do it, we are also reforming the agencies. Sure, people talk about appropriators as spenders, but we have a sense in this committee on both sides of the aisle—and I must say that Senator SHELBY has helped lead this—that we need to be a more frugal government. We need to get value for our dollar, demonstrating that we need to be able to save money or use money. We are going to spend very wisely.

It has been 3 years since we were able to bring an appropriations bill to the floor. I am not going to go into all the reasons why. "Why" doesn't get the job done. What we need to do is return to regular order. So what does that mean? Today we have these three bills pending. It means we want to enact all of our appropriations bills by October 1. We want to keep government operating not on autopilot, not on shutdown, nor on lavish spending. We have to reduce our Federal deficit, but we also have to reduce other deficits, particularly in the area of deficits related to innovation as well as the fact that our crime rates are on the rise in many cities and we need to reduce them. The American people today want to make sure we have a government they can count on. But they need to count on the fact that not only are we open and doing business but that when we are, we are smarter about it.

Vice Chairman SHELBY and I have been working on a bipartisan basis. We have been working on a bicameral basis. That means hands across the aisle, hands across the dome to restore regular order and civility in this process.

I look forward to moving this bill. I would say to my colleagues who are listening, many of my colleagues saw a few months ago the way Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER, Senator TOM HARKIN, Senator RICHARD BURR, and I moved a bipartisan bill on the child care and development block grant. That had not been reauthorized since 1996, but we showed we could do it. We cleared 18 amendments. We actually had votes on amendments. We had an open process where amendments could be offered, discussed, debated, and at the end of the day voted on because we had a process that worked. As Senators