

that at all, but they live in communities where people will misuse these firearms.

We have a moral responsibility in the Senate to do everything we can to keep firearms out of the hands of people who misuse them. We have a legal and moral responsibility to accept this opportunity in the Senate to debate these issues. We cannot run away from them any more than we can run away from the violence in our streets. I am not alone in my feelings on this issue. There are other Senators who share them. It is time for us to stand up and speak up. We have a responsibility to the people we represent, to innocent people who are being threatened and killed across America.

What happened in Chicago over the Fourth of July weekend is a wakeup call—another wakeup call—to the Senate to get about the business of our purpose here, the reason we were elected—to try to make America a better and safer place.

Madam President, 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.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

(The remarks of Mrs. MURRAY pertaining to the introduction of S. 2565 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mrs. MURRAY. I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

BIPARTISAN SPORTSMEN'S ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 384, S. 2363.

The clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 384, S. 2363, a bill to protect and enhance opportunities for recreational hunting, fishing, and shooting, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I rise in support of the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act.

First, I thank Senators HAGAN and MURKOWSKI for their leadership in gathering support and getting this bill to the floor.

Nearly half of the Senate is cosponsoring this legislation from every cor-

ner of our country. It is truly a national bill, and that is why over 30 groups—from the National Shooting Sports Foundation and Ducks Unlimited to the Dallas Safari Club and many others—support this bill. It is an ambitious proposal that includes dozens of smart ideas from both sides of the aisle. It encourages private investment into fish habitat as well as land and wildlife management.

This bill supports public shooting ranges so more folks have a place to take their kids to teach them how to responsibly handle a firearm, and it protects some of our best places to hunt, fish, and recreate.

Make no mistake, the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act is also a jobs bill, which is something we constantly talk about needing more of around here.

In my State of Montana, outdoor recreation supports tens of thousands of jobs. It is a \$6 billion-a-year industry. Nationwide our outdoor economy creates and sustains more than 6 million jobs every single year.

Despite the economic power of public lands to sustain the rural economy, some folks are talking about closing off the land and privatizing it. We cannot let that happen. Instead, we need to pass the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act, which will strengthen our economy as we create more opportunities for folks to continue recreating in our great outdoors. Responsibly enjoying our outdoors is part of our way of life in Montana. In the Big Sky State we are proud hunters, anglers, sports men and women, and that is why it is critical that this bill will open more of our public lands to every law-abiding American who has a right to access them.

In Montana alone, nearly 2 million acres of public land is not easily accessible to folks, and I am proud my colleagues included the making lands public provision that I have pushed for, for years. These lands were set aside for our parents to enjoy, for all of us to enjoy, and ultimately for our children and grandchildren to enjoy. Accessing these lands is our birthright, and this bill delivers on a century-old promise to preserve our outdoor heritage.

By passing this bipartisan legislation, we will help ensure future generations get to experience the natural wonders that were passed down to us.

In the last Congress, the Senate took up a similar package only to see political gamesmanship get in the way. We cannot let that happen again. Millions of sports men and women across this country expect better. The American people deserve better. There is too much in this bill that we agree on to let it fail once again.

Senators HAGAN and MURKOWSKI have worked diligently for months to craft a bill that has an incredible amount of support in the Senate, but, most importantly, back home in the States we all represent. Let's pass this bill once and for all.

Madam President, 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. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, Americans might have noticed a trend in ObamaCare headlines over the past two days. There was Sunday's Politico story and it basically had this title: "Why liberals are abandoning the Obamacare employer mandate."

There was an Associated Press story entitled "Senate Democrats Try to Pull Focus From Obamacare."

Then on Monday, Politico published a story called "Obamacare's next threat: A September surprise" about the White House efforts to prepare Democrats to meet September rate hike announcements.

All of these stories amount to one thing. Democrats are running scared from ObamaCare.

These three articles are just a few of the many pieces to be published about Democrats' efforts to distance themselves from ObamaCare in preparation for the November election.

It is not surprising they are worried. ObamaCare is Democrats' and the White House's main legislative achievement, and Americans don't like it. They didn't like it in 2010 when the law was passed, they didn't like it when the law was being implemented, and they don't like it now. A Quinnipiac poll from last week reported that 55 percent of Americans oppose ObamaCare. Similar numbers of Americans opposed it 3 months earlier, and almost 3 months before that. In fact, when we average polling on the health care law from late 2009 until today, we find the health care law has consistently been opposed by the majority of Americans. Opposition to the health care law currently averages nearly 14 percentage points higher than support. That is not a good sign for Democrats.

Many Democrats who firmly supported the health care law in 2009 and 2010 believed the law would grow more popular when the American people found out what was in the bill and how it would benefit them. But the health care law has not gotten more popular. Americans found out what was in the bill and they didn't like it. Democrats are realizing that their support for the bill may cost them their seats in November. So now they are running in the opposite direction.

According to Monday's Politico article, the White House knows very well that Democrats are finding ObamaCare to be a big problem in their campaigns.

So it has redirected the efforts of its ObamaCare war room to prepare for the release of rate hikes that are coming in September. "The White House and its allies know"—this is a quote from the story—"they've been beaten in every previous round of ObamaCare messaging, never more devastatingly than in 2010." The story goes on to say:

And they know the results this November could hinge in large part on whether that happens again. So they are trying to avoid—or at least get ahead of—any September surprise.

That is from the Politico story.

Let me just say to the White House: Good luck with that.

There is a reason why the White House and its allies have been, as Politico notes, "beaten in every previous round of ObamaCare messaging." It is because the White House's messaging didn't match up with the reality it promised Americans.

The White House can talk all it wants about ObamaCare's supposed benefits, but if Americans aren't experiencing those benefits, no amount of talking is going to work. Most Americans aren't experiencing ObamaCare benefits. They are experiencing ObamaCare pain: higher premiums, higher deductibles, the loss of doctors and hospitals, less control and less freedom.

As have most Members of Congress, I have gotten countless letters from constituents telling me about the pain ObamaCare is causing them. Tom from Hurley, SD, wrote to me to tell me his premiums have more than doubled and his deductible has quadrupled since the President's health care law was enacted.

Harvey from Mitchell, SD, wrote to tell me that his insurance went up 16 percent effective April 1 of this year. "Biggest increase ever," he said.

Jill from Sturgis, SD, wrote to tell me that she went on line to get a health insurance estimate at healthcare.gov and found that the cheapest plan would cost her \$366 a month with a \$5,000 deductible. "Are you kidding me?", she wrote. "That's \$9,392 a year I have to pay in, every year, before it pays anything . . . which is roughly 16 percent of our combined income. I can't afford that and try to save money for retirement at the same time" she says.

Jill is not alone in not being able to afford that. Too many Americans are in similar situations, facing the prospect of huge health care bills and wondering how on Earth they are going to pay them.

All the talk in the world from the White House isn't going to make people enthusiastic about ObamaCare if they can't afford their ObamaCare premiums or have lost access to the doctor or the hospital they like.

Politico reports that 21 States—21 States—have posted preliminary health insurance premiums for 2015, and that average preliminary premiums went up in all 21 States. Those proposed in-

creases—several in the double digits—are coming on top of the State premium hikes many Americans faced this year.

The White House can attempt to defend these increases as much as it wants, but there really isn't any way to spin huge premium hikes when they promised people their premiums not only wouldn't increase but would actually go down.

ObamaCare is fundamentally broken. This bill was supposed to reduce health care premiums and lower the cost of care while allowing Americans to keep the doctors they like. Instead, it has done the exact opposite. ObamaCare isn't just driving up health care premiums; it is also devastating our already damaged economy.

The ObamaCare 30-hour workweek rule is forcing businesses, large and small, to reduce employees' hours at a time when many Americans are struggling to find full-time work. USA Today reported yesterday that Friday's unemployment report found a sharp rise in the number of part-time workers who prefer full-time jobs. So what we have is people who want to work full-time but full-time jobs are unavailable, so they are taking part-time work. Why? Well, one of the reasons they attribute it to is the ObamaCare requirement that the work week be a 30-hour week as opposed to a 40-hour week. So what is happening is employers are hiring employees for less than 30 hours a week so they won't be stuck with all of the requirements and the mandates that come with ObamaCare. So it is leading to more part-time jobs when people are actually looking for full-time work in our economy.

The law's burdensome mandates and regulations are placing a heavy burden on small businesses and making it impossible for many of them to expand and to hire employees. As Politico reported, when it comes to the employer mandate, even liberals are admitting that the rule is unnecessary and burdensome. Politico notes:

The shift among liberal policy experts and advocates has been rapid. A stream of studies and statements have deemed the mandate only moderately useful for getting more people covered in ObamaCare. And they too have come to see it as clumsy, a regulatory and financial burden that creates as many problems as it solves.

That is from the Politico story talking about many of the liberal policy experts who are now turning their backs on the employer mandate.

Then there is the potential for fraud, with the Health and Human Services inspector general's office reporting that the administration is not properly verifying that those receiving subsidies actually qualify for them. And the disastrous Web sites have cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

The list goes on and on and on. Whether they admit it or not, everyone knows that ObamaCare is not working. It is time to start over and replace this law with real reforms—reforms that

will actually lower costs and improve access to care.

Republicans have offered solution after solution to solve the many problems created by ObamaCare—from Senator COLLINS' bill to repeal ObamaCare's 30-hour workweek, which I just mentioned earlier, to a provision I came up with that would exempt schools, colleges, and universities from ObamaCare's crippling employer mandate—something that our colleges and universities across the country are feeling and it is impacting their ability to hire employees.

Instead of fleeing from ObamaCare or attempting to put a positive spin on its many failures, Democrats should join Republicans to repeal this broken law and replace it with real reforms. Then Democrats would have a real accomplishment to take home to their constituents, and they would not have to worry about having the White House send a team of people in the war room assigned to Democrats here on Capitol Hill who are trying to figure out ways to message the bad news that keeps coming out about higher premiums, higher copays, higher deductibles, fewer doctors, and fewer hospitals. That is the message that Democrats here in Congress are having to deal with when they respond to the constituents they hear from in their districts or their States. And that is why the White House is so focused on changing the subject to anything from ObamaCare.

That is the reality, and it is an economic reality that is affecting and impacting way to many American families. Middle-income families in this country are squeezed. Household income has gone down by \$3,300 since the President took office. Everything middle-income Americans have to pay for has gone up—from health care to college education to fuel, electricity, food—you name it.

So those middle-income families in this country are increasingly feeling squeezed and pinched by this economy, made much, much worse by the passage of a health care law that has driven up the cost of health care—higher premiums, fewer doctors, fewer hospitals, fewer full-time jobs or part-time jobs. Why? Because employers are trying to avoid the heavyhanded mandates and requirements to provide government-approved insurance, and so they are finding more and more part-time employees when the employees—people out there in the workforce—are looking for full-time jobs so they can provide for their families. Good-paying jobs with opportunities for advancement—that is what we ought to be focused on. Unfortunately, everything coming out of Washington, DC, and particularly the policies coming out of this administration—namely, first and foremost, ObamaCare is making it more expensive and more difficult for employers to hire. It is costing middle-income families more to cover their families with health coverage, and it is

making everything else in our economy more expensive.

That is the reality that most Americans are dealing with. We can do so much better. We should do so much better. If Democrats will acknowledge the error of their ways in the passage of this bad law to start with, we can go back to the drawing board and do this in a way that actually does reduce cost and provide better access to health care for American families.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak to the Senate as in morning business.

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

EXCESS FEDERAL PROPERTY

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, while I was home over the recess, I had the opportunity to visit with lots of Kansans. One of the conversations I had was with a county emergency preparedness director in advance of a Fourth of July parade. He brought to my attention something we had heard just in the last few days about a development at the Department of Defense.

I want to mention to my colleagues and ask them, but ask the agencies involved—which would be the Department of Defense, the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency—to see if we cannot find a solution to a problem that should not be a problem.

In the Presiding Officer's State and mine we have lots of volunteer fire departments. One of the developments over time has been their equipment is excess military equipment that is either loaned or given to those small town fire departments. They are volunteers. In my hometown, the fire whistle blows and men and women from across the community gather at the fire station, get in the truck, and go to the fire and fight the fire.

Their equipment is expensive and the budget they have to fulfill their mission is small. One way they have been able to overcome that small budget and expensive equipment is through the Department of Defense, which has, over a long period of time, donated excess military equipment to the local fire departments. They do this through the State forester. In fact, 95 percent of the communities in Kansas are protected by a volunteer fire department and 50 million acres of land is protected by volunteer fire departments.

Well, 3 weeks ago, the Department of Defense halted the transfer of excess trucks, generators, pumps, and engine parts, based upon emissions regulations and an agreement that appar-

ently exists between the Department of Defense and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The EPA, apparently, has to approve the transfer of those vehicles because they may not satisfy the clean air standards. So what seems to me to be a commonsense solution to the need for fire equipment—including trucks—is now being halted because of concerns of whether those vehicles—those old vehicles no longer used by the Department of Defense—meet the emissions standards.

Well, I would certainly first remind folks that these trucks are very important when there is a fire, but there is not a fire every day. It is not as if these vehicles are on the road in a constant fashion day in and day out. I would also indicate that the fires they put out increase emissions, so the marginal increase in the amount of emissions because you may be using a fire truck that does not meet the emissions standards is well overcome by the fire that burns the grass, the forest, the trees or a home by what that fire puts into the atmosphere.

Since January 1 of this year, there have been nearly 92,000 acres burned in more than 5,000 wild land fires—grass fires—across Kansas.

For most of those rural fire departments, the Federal excess equipment is the only equipment they can afford to handle those natural or manmade disasters.

The Kansas Forest Service, as I said, administers this program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. They provided 40 to 50 trucks per year, and they were able to set aside again that number for Kansas—40 to 50 trucks—for Kansas fire departments for this year.

We currently have 445 trucks issued in Kansas, valued at about \$21 million, and there are 52 fire departments in Kansas waiting for a replacement truck.

The Department of Defense decision to implement this policy will cost fire departments in Kansas and across the country the opportunity to utilize excess equipment, save lives, and protect property.

My request is that my colleagues who have an interest in this issue work with me and others and help us bring to the attention of the Secretary of Defense, Secretary Hagel, and the EPA Administrator, Gina McCarthy, as well as USDA, which administers the program for the fire departments, that we work together to find a commonsense solution.

Apparently the alternative is if these trucks are not available to be transferred to Kansas and elsewhere, to local fire departments, then the trucks are destroyed, smashed, and somehow disposed of in a landfill. Again, I would suggest that the conservation, the environmental opportunity to see the life of these vehicles extended, as compared to being destroyed, smashed, and disposed of, would work in the favor of the environment as well as in the oppor-

tunity to provide safety and security for hundreds of thousands of Kansans, hundreds of thousands of Americans, who depend upon rural fire departments, hometown fire departments, to meet the needs of their safety and security.

It seems to me we are asking for something simple. We need a little common sense and cooperation among an agency and two departments. I would ask my colleagues that you help me find a solution to this problem by getting those agencies, the Department of Defense in particular, to explain why this is a good policy with such detriment to the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BARRASSO. I come to the floor today because it seems day after day there is another story or two in the paper about what is happening with the President's health care law. As I go home to Wyoming each week, I go through Denver and the airport there. Today the headline in the Denver Post has to do with the Colorado health exchanges. The first line says: "Colorado's health care exchange is expecting nearly twice as many people to drop or to decline to pay for their policies." You know, they predicted how many people would continue to make payments if they had signed up under the President's health care law. Today they are predicting that twice as many as they anticipated would be either dropping or failing to pay for their health care premiums.

The Wall Street Journal today, above the fold, front page, "Newly Insured Face Coverage Gaps." So you get people who may have signed up under the President's health care law, coverage gaps, not paying, dropping, truly not the deal the President has said was something he felt would be helpful to Americans. More and more people are finding out they are having bigger problems under the President's health care law, problems with the promises that were made by this President, by this administration, and by those who voted for the health care law.

I get home just about every weekend in Wyoming to talk with people, to listen to them, to hear what they have to say. But also as chairman of the Republican Policy Committee, one of my responsibilities is also to see how policies such as the President's health care law come out across the country, what happens in other States, how policies out of Washington affect people all across America.

Today I wish to talk a little about how the health care law is impacting people not just in my home State of Wyoming but all across the country. In addition to being in Wyoming last week, I had a chance to visit Alaska. What I heard from people there as well as people in Wyoming is that people