

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

ENERGY REGULATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, earlier this week I hosted a tele-townhall with people from across western Kentucky, from places such as Lyon County and Webster County. These constituents shared their thoughts on a range of issues, from ObamaCare to taxes, but one issue kept coming up over and over again. The Kentuckians I spoke with were truly worried about the Obama administration's war on coal jobs. They have seen the devastation in eastern Kentucky, and they know what the President's newest regulations will likely mean for middle-class families such as theirs: skyrocketing utility bills, higher prices, fewer jobs. They know the administration's war is an elitist crusade that threatens to shift good, well-paying jobs overseas, splinter our manufacturing base, and throw yet another load onto the backs of middle-class Kentuckians who have already struggled so much.

The hard-working people I represent are worried enough just about making their mortgage payments and paying for car repairs and coping with energy bills and summer vacations. These are the people whom President Obama and his Washington Democratic allies should be listening to—not to liberal elites who have been begging the President to go after the coal industry and the people whose livelihoods depend on it. But President Obama does not seem terribly interested in those folks or their problems. Once again he will be off campaigning this week. He will huddle with more leftwing ideologues—the folks who love to make a buck off of coal and then attack coal families with ego-driven political crusades, such as the ideology the President rolled out the red carpet for just a few weeks ago down at the White House.

Meanwhile, here in the Senate the Democratic majority will continue to block and tackle for the President and his anticoal offensive. Senate Democrats block basically every attempt—every attempt, however small—to inject congressional oversight into the administration's energy regulations. They shut down votes. They obstruct the committee process that should be at the heart of our work. They even gag their own Members.

They blocked commonsense legislation such as the Coal Country Protection Act. What that bill—my bill—would do is require the administration to certify that jobs will not be lost and utility rates will not go up as a result of the President's energy regulations. That is not too much to ask. But Washington Democrats are blocking my bill because they know the President's reg-

ulations will cost jobs and will raise utility rates, and they are more interested in protecting the President's ideological agenda than jobs.

In other words, Senate Democrats block and tackle and obstruct—all to defend the President's war on coal jobs. It is a clear case of extreme devotion, and it makes sense because the Democratic majority really only has one mission these days: Protect the President and the left at all costs. That is why the average Democratic Senator has almost no power anymore. Our friends on the other side of the aisle do not ever get to do anything. They are just another backbencher fortifying President Obama's Senate moat—the place where good ideas go to die. It is a shame.

The Senate used to be a place where big ideas were debated and serious solutions were explored. Committees operated and amendments were offered. I remember a time not too long ago when there was even such a thing as an independent-minded Senate Democrat. But today's Democratic leadership has put an end to all of that.

It is about time our Washington Democratic friends open their eyes to the true cost of the President's policies, both in my State and in theirs.

It is time for these Washington Democrats to stop pretending they are not complicit in the administration's war on coal jobs or in the harm it is causing to our constituents because there is real pain out there. Beyond the Democratic echo chamber, there is real pain out there, out in the real world, in places such as Pike County.

Washington Democrats need to understand that Kentuckians are more than just some statistic on the bureaucratic balance sheet. These are real Americans who are hurting, and they deserve to have their voices heard. One way to do that, as I have suggested, is for the administration to hold some listening sessions on its new energy regulations in the areas that stand to suffer the most from them, in places such as eastern and western Kentucky. I have already issued multiple invitations for the President's people to visit places in my home State. I am issuing one again today.

The sad truth is that officials in Washington do not want to come anywhere near coal country. They just want to impose their regulations, hear some "feedback" from the echo chamber in order to check a box, and then move right along to the next front in their war on coal. They do not even want to talk to the very people they intend to put out of work. Well, several tele-townhall participants want to know why the President will not come down to see the mines and the coal families themselves. I am wondering too.

Mr. President, the campaign trips can wait. You recently expressed an interest in hanging around middle-class Americans for a change. What I am saying is, here is a perfect chance.

Come on down to Kentucky and talk to some coal miners.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SPECIALIST KEVIN J. GRAHAM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the life of one soldier from Kentucky who gave his life in service to our country. SPC Kevin J. Graham of Benton, KY, was killed in Kandahar, Afghanistan, on September 26, 2009, when the enemy attacked his vehicle with an IED. He was 27 years old.

For his service in uniform, Specialist Graham received many medals, awards, and decorations, including the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the Combat Infantryman Badge, the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon, the NATO Medal, the Expert Marksmanship Badge, the National Defense Service Medal, and the Army Service Ribbon.

Soldiering was not simply a vocation to Specialist Graham; it was a way of life and it was a calling. From a young age, friends and family recall his strong desire to become a soldier.

"Before he went into the Army, he would see guys in uniform and say he needed to be doing something like that," says the Reverend Jonathan Goodman, Kevin's pastor from Benton's Calvary Baptist Church. "He felt like it was his life's work, and he was honored to serve his country."

Kevin was born in 1982 in Illinois and raised in Wisconsin. He moved with his parents to Marshall County, KY, about 5 years before his death. As a child Kevin received his education through Christian Liberty Academy as a homeschooler. He was a member of Paddock Lake Baptist Church in Wisconsin, where he was involved with the youth group and assisted the youth pastor.

As a young boy Kevin and his best friend used to dress up in Army fatigues and patrol the neighborhood. Neighbors would say they felt safe because they knew someone was watching out for them. Kevin's interest in the military also included a love of military history. He would read endlessly about the Civil War and World War II and talk often with his father, grandfather, and others who had served about their experiences. Kevin collected memorabilia from different conflicts, including some given to him by veterans. His interest in military aviation led him to spend his summers at an airfield in Kenosha, WI, to see hundreds of World War II planes gather in formation.

Kevin also learned to shoot at an early age. By the time he was 16, he had earned a job overseeing the skeet range at the local shooting facility. He

earned many badges for his marksman-ship, including one for hitting his target 73 out of 75 times.

Kevin also had a love for old cars. He bought a 1965 Pontiac Le Mans and rebuilt it from the ground up. He attended countless car shows and won several trophies.

In July 2007 Kevin fulfilled a lifelong goal and honored the service of his father Daniel, who earned a Purple Heart for his service in Vietnam, by enlisting in the U.S. Army. He completed basic training that November.

One of Kevin's closest friends, Tristan Miller, joined the Army within months of Kevin. Kevin "was enlisting in a time of war and he chose to enlist as an infantryman," Tristan recalls. "Kevin knew what he was going into. This was something he volunteered to do. Kevin knew something was wrong out there, and he was going to take a stand about it."

Kevin was later based at Fort Lewis, WA, where he met the woman who would become his wife, Krystal, in the fall of 2008. On March 22, 2009, they were married, just a few days before Kevin's 27th birthday. Kevin also grew very close to Krystal's son Brian and enjoyed spending time as a dad.

Then, in July, Kevin was deployed to Afghanistan—his first deployment. He deployed as part of 4th Platoon, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment, 5th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, based out of Fort Lewis. He was promoted to specialist and assigned to be a mortar carrier driver, a responsibility given to those soldiers among the best able to remain calm in the face of a crisis. No doubt Kevin's lifetime of preparation, going back to his boyhood neighborhood patrols, served him well for his greatest and final role.

"It was an honor to be his parents," says Sandra Graham, Kevin's mother. "Truly an honor."

We are thinking of Kevin's family and friends today, including his wife Krystal, his stepson Brian, his mother Sandra, his brothers Daniel, Sean, and Scott, and many other beloved family members and friends. Kevin's father, Daniel Graham, a hero in his own right, has sadly passed on.

Mr. President, I know my U.S. Senate colleagues join me in expressing our deepest condolences to the family of SPC Kevin J. Graham and great gratitude for his life of honorable service and his enormous sacrifice in uniform. Without heroes like Specialist Graham, our country could not be free. I hope it is some small measure of comfort to his family that the life of Specialist Graham has been remembered and appropriately honored here in the U.S. Senate.

Those of us in this body must never forget the men and women such as Specialist Graham who built the foundation upon which our democracy stands.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). Under the previous order the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12 noon, with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant majority leader.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, 14 dead, 82 wounded—that grim statistic was reported this weekend. It was not from Baghdad. It was not from Damascus. It was not from Gaza. No, it was not from the Middle East. It was from the Midwest. It was from the city of Chicago—14 dead, 82 wounded over the Fourth of July weekend.

This morning the Chicago Tribune headline read: "2 dead, 9 hurt in shootings on the South, West sides"—last night. A 17-year-old boy who would have started college orientation Thursday was shot to death Tuesday night in the Brainerd neighborhood, one of at least 11 people shot across the city since Tuesday afternoon. A boy was struck in the chest and back and died on the scene. Four minutes later, on the West Side, a 23-year-old man was fatally shot as he rode his bicycle in a Humboldt Park neighborhood.

The story goes on to recount each and every incident. These numbers cloak the grief that families are now going through as someone they love is either gone or seriously injured. When you listen to their voices, you understand what life is like in the mean streets on the South Side and West Side of Chicago.

Greg Baron, a 20-year-old from Chicago's South Side, has already been a victim of gun violence once. He spoke to the Chicago Tribune yesterday and said: "I have to watch my back every day because I do not want to get killed or shot again."

Marsha Lee, a Chicago mother, has already lost one son to gun violence. She recently described how she had to teach her three little girls how to take care of themselves when it came to the gunfire. She told National Public Radio: "You have to get down low, get down on the ground, and stay on the ground until it's over, and when it's over you have to check yourself and check one another to see if anybody has been hit."

Life in Chicago, life in America—I agree with Mayor Rahm Emanuel of Chicago. This type of violence is absolutely unacceptable. While the number of murders in Chicago statistically is, thankfully, down compared to last year, there are still too many deaths

from gun violence and too many people living in fear. Who pays the price? The families do, but all of us do.

The University of Chicago Crime Lab calculates the total cost of gun violence in America at around \$100 billion a year—\$100 billion. That is a staggering number. Cook County, which, of course, contains the city of Chicago, estimates the trauma care for each shooting victim costs \$52,000 on average. So for last weekend, with 80 wounded Chicagoans, we just added \$4 million in health care costs, assuming that they can be treated and released at some point in the near future.

It is time to do something about it. It is time to stop talking about it. I did some polls across our State, and even more important, as I visited the State, I asked questions from one end to the other. We are quite a diverse State. Southern Illinois is the South. As the late Paul Simon used to say: Southern Illinois is the land of grits and gospel music—small town America. It is rural. It is where my family roots are. I know what they think about guns. Guns are part of the culture. Guns are part of the family experience. A father taking his son or even his daughter out to hunt is an important moment in each of their lives.

They value the ownership of guns and overwhelmingly use them responsibly and legally for hunting and for target practice. Still, when you speak to those people about gun violence in the cities and ask them a very basic question, these proud gun owners respond in a way that I am proud of. They agree that no convicted felon and no person mentally unstable should be able to buy a gun, period.

We considered that on the floor of the Senate—the Manchin-Toomey amendment. Close the gun show loophole. Ask the question: Have you been convicted of a felony? Is there something in your background that suggests a mental instability that should prohibit you from owning a gun? We could not pass that measure.

But I offered another measure as well. It is one that relates to this basic issue. If we want to keep guns out of the hands of those who would misuse them, if we want to protect the rights of law-abiding, respectful citizens who own firearms and follow the law, then we should take care and make sure we do everything in our power to keep guns out of the hands of folks who will use them to hurt and kill innocent people.

The superintendent of police in Chicago is Gary McCarthy. I like Gary a lot. He came to Chicago from New York, hired by Mayor Emanuel. He really has rolled up his sleeves and gone out in the streets and tried to tackle this terrible issue of gun violence. They asked him about this weekend, with 14 dead and 82 wounded in Chicago.

He said: "Something has to happen to slow down the straw purchasing that happens in this State." Let me explain