

Of course not. People are afraid to go to a movie theater or to a concert.

The bill before the Senate today is to get rid of ObamaCare, and everybody knows it is just a gesture in futility. They have tried it 60 times or 48 times—I don’t know; we lost track—in the House, and every time, the same answer: No. In the Senate, we have done it 14, 15 times—always the same answer. Einstein said the definition of “insanity” is when someone does the same thing over and over again knowing they are going to get the same result. So we are wasting our time today. Everyone knows the result.

But we have the opportunity to cast a vote here today—or we will shortly—because we are focused on doing something. People on this side of the aisle are focused on doing something to stop this gun violence, and we are going to force amendments to that end today—not many but a few. We will try to do something, anything.

Are we going to vote on expanded background checks? Shouldn’t we do that at least? We are going to vote to prevent criminals convicted of harassing women’s health clinics from buying a gun, owning a gun.

Senators will have to decide where they stand on these amendments. Do they stand with babies who were killed in Connecticut, families who want to do nothing more than go about their day without the daily threat of shootings? My friends in Nevada, two police officers in uniform sitting down to have a lunch break, and two people walk in behind them and shoot them in the back of the head and kill them. They went over to Walmart and killed another person.

People are afraid.

There was a time in my legislative career that I tried to work with the National Rifle Association, but the NRA today is a far cry from the sportsmen’s organization I once supported. The NRA once called mandatory background checks “reasonable.” That is what they said; I am not making this up. But now its leadership and organization have transformed into a quasi-militant wing of the Republican Party. They are being pushed more and more into the camp of guns for everybody anytime they want them, and they are being pushed by the—they have a competitor now: Gun Owners of America.

Those who choose to do the NRA’s bidding will be held accountable by our constituents. Their vote against these sensible measures will be a stain for all of the American people to see.

Something has to be done. We must take a stand. The American people are desperately looking for help—some help, any help. It will never be possible to prevent every shooting. We know that. But we have a responsibility to try. There are certain things we can do. If someone is mentally deranged and a criminal, should they be able to walk in and buy a gun anywhere? Of course not. We have a responsibility as lawmakers to enact commonsense re-

forms that have been proven to stop attacks and save lives. I hope Republicans will find the courage to join with us and pass meaningful legislation to prevent further gun violence.

I apologize for speaking before the Republican leader, but I was told he was going to be late.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

TRAGEDY IN SAN BERNARDINO

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the senseless loss of life in San Bernardino continues to defy explanation. We have faith that law enforcement will continue working hard to uncover the truth behind this tragedy. Today, what we should all agree upon is that we will keep the victims and the families in our thoughts, that we as a Senate offer condolences to them, and that we as a Senate recognize the continuing efforts of law enforcement officials and first responders.

OBAMACARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, middle-class Americans continue to call on Washington to build a bridge away from ObamaCare. They want better care. They want real health reform. For too long, Democrats did everything to prevent Congress from passing the type of legislation necessary to help these Americans who are hurting.

Well, today, Mr. President, that ends. Today, a middle class that has suffered enough from a partisan law will see the Senate vote to build a bridge past ObamaCare and toward better care.

The Restoring Americans’ Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act we are debating deserves the support of every Member of this body because here is what we know. ObamaCare is a direct attack on the middle class. It is riddled with higher costs and broken promises. It is defined by failure. It is punctuated with hopelessness. And the scale of its many broken promises is matched only by the scale of its defenders’ rigid and unfeeling responses to it.

Let us consider just a few right now. Americans were promised they could keep their health plans if they liked them. It was a promise Democrats made to sell ObamaCare and it is a promise they broke. Americans could only keep their plans if the President liked them, not if they liked them. Americans could only keep their plans if the President liked them.

Millions saw the coverage they liked ripped away as a result of a callous and partisan law.

Democrats’ response to their broken promise? They tried to dismiss stories about folks losing insurance by saying they had lousy plans anyway and that they should be grateful the government

was taking them away. The American people took a different view.

Here is a note I received from a constituent in Caldwell County when her family lost their plan. Here is what she said:

I was lied to by the President and Congress when we were told the “Affordable” Care Act would not require us to switch from our current insurance provider. My husband and I work hard, pay a lot of taxes and ask for little from our government. Is it asking too much for government to stay out of my health insurance?

Americans were promised that ObamaCare would lower costs and even bring down premiums by \$2,500 per family. It is a promise Democrats made to sell ObamaCare, and it is a promise they broke.

Just last night, we learned from the government’s own actuaries that ObamaCare is leading to higher health care costs. We also know that premiums continue to shoot up by double digits in many areas, including Kentucky.

Democrats’ response to their broken promise? President Obama said Americans who already had health insurance “may not know that they’ve got a better deal now [under ObamaCare] than they did, but they do.” Obviously, the President thinks he knows more about our health insurance than we do. Of course, the American people took a different view.

One Kentuckian wrote me after being forced into an ObamaCare plan she called “subpar” with a nearly \$5,000 deductible. “I cried myself to sleep,” she said. “I work hard for every penny I earn,” and this “is unacceptable.”

Americans were promised ObamaCare would create millions of jobs. It is a promise Democrats made to sell ObamaCare, and it is a promise they broke. ObamaCare is leading to fewer jobs, not more of them. In Kentucky, our Democratic Governor once declared it an “undisputed fact” that ObamaCare’s Medicaid expansion had added 12,000 jobs to Kentucky’s economy. But as Kentuckians now know, he was undisputedly wrong. Not only did those jobs fail to materialize, but health care jobs have actually declined in Kentucky since the passage of ObamaCare.

Democrats’ response to their broken promise? I think this headline about the comments of a senior Democrat captures it perfectly: “ObamaCare allows workers to ‘escape’ their jobs”—to escape their jobs. Well, the American people took a different view.

A constituent from Somerset wrote to tell me that ObamaCare’s mandates were causing her to lose up to 11 hours—up to 11 hours—per week at work, which meant about \$440 less in her pocket every month. “ObamaCare,” she said, “[is] causing us to lose hours [and] lose wages, yet expecting us to spend more.”

Now, Americans were promised ObamaCare wouldn’t touch Medicare. Americans were promised that taxes

wouldn't increase. Americans were promised shopping for ObamaCare would be as simple as shopping for a TV on Amazon. Three more promises, three more betrayals, and on and on and on it has gone for more than 5 long years.

Democrats need to understand it is time to face up to the pain and the failure their law has caused. They can keep trying to talk past the middle class. They can keep trying to deny reality. But they have to realize that no one is buying the spin but them.

Americans are living with the consequences of this broken law and its broken promises every single day. Its negative effects are often felt in the most personal and visceral ways, and Americans are tired of being condescended to. They want change, and they want a bridge to better care, not ObamaCare, and this bill offers it.

I think Democrats have a particular responsibility to the millions their law has hurt already to help pass the law we have before us. I think the President has a particular responsibility to the millions his law has hurt already to then sign it. That is the best way to build a bridge to a fresh start—to a better, healthier, and stronger beginning.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE NEW SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on another matter, every day this week I have mentioned some of the significant accomplishments of a Senate under new management—a Senate that has put its focus back on the American people.

After years of inaction, this Senate took bipartisan action to help the victims of modern day slavery. Many said the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act would never pass the Senate, but we proved them wrong. We proved it could actually pass by a wide bipartisan margin. In a new and more open Senate, Senator CORNYN was able to work with Democratic partners to ensure it ultimately did.

After years of inaction, the Senate took bipartisan action to protect the privacy of Americans. Many said the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act would never pass the Senate, but we proved them wrong. We proved it could actually pass by a wide bipartisan margin. In a new and more open Senate, Senator BURR, a Republican, and Senator FEINSTEIN, a Democrat, were able to ensure that it ultimately did.

After years of inaction, the Senate took bipartisan action to lift children up with better educational opportunities. Many said the Every Child Achieves Act would never pass the Senate, but we proved them wrong. We proved it could actually pass by a wide bipartisan margin. In a new and more open Senate, Senator ALEXANDER, a Republican, and Senator MURRAY, a Democrat, were able to ensure that it ultimately did.

And after years of inaction, the Senate took bipartisan action to meaningfully improve our roads and infrastructure over the coming years. Many said that the long-term Highway and Transportation Funding Act would never pass the Senate, but we proved them wrong. We proved it could actually pass by a wide bipartisan margin. In a new and more open Senate, Senator INHOFE, a Republican, and Senator BOXER, a Democrat, were able to ensure that it ultimately did.

Today, we are on the verge of passing that bill again. We are on the verge of passing it into law. The revised legislation we will consider provides 5 full years of highway funding. It would be the longest term bill to pass Congress in almost two decades, and it would provide long-term certainty in a fiscally responsible way. In other words, this bill will finally provide State and local governments with the kind of certainty they need to focus on longer term road and bridge projects. This is a significant departure from years—years—of short-term extensions.

There is a lot more to say about what the new Congress has been able to achieve on behalf of the American people. I look forward to continuing to share these successes here on the floor.

Tuesday's announcement on the highway bill is just the latest reminder of what is possible in a new and more open Senate. It builds the basis for more wins into the future. And most importantly, it is an achievement for the American people—an achievement that only a new Congress has been able to deliver.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

WORK OF THE SENATE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, no matter how many times my friend—and we have served together in this body for a long, long time—comes here and talks about how wonderful this Senate is under Republican leadership, the facts aren't on his side. He talked about getting things done after years of inaction. The inaction was the result of Republican filibusters—recordbreaking filibusters.

Bill after bill was blocked. Elementary and secondary education, cyber security, everything that he mentioned—everything, without exception—would have been done a long time ago except for Republican filibusters. To now come to the floor and claim: Isn't it wonderful we were able to get things done during this Congress, because we did not block things—no matter how many times he comes, we and the pundits have already said it is the most unproductive year in the Senate's history. We have had more revotes than at any time in the history of the country and less done than at any time in the country's history.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wonder what my Republican friends do when they are not here in Washington, DC. Do they bother to talk to their constituents? Do they sit down and meet them at townhall meetings or across a fence in someone's backyard? I have a hard time believing my Republican friends are spending much time listening to constituents' concerns. I already talked about guns today.

It seems to me what we are doing is counter to the needs of constituents. This absurd—absurd—attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act through reconciliation is a perfect example. Every day the Republican leader comes to the floor and rails against ObamaCare, yet more than 10 percent of his constituents are benefiting from the Affordable Care Act—500,000 people. I can't believe those people in Kentucky are telling the Republican leader to take away their health care.

Now, he is not alone in pushing the repeal that would expressly hurt people back home. He and the junior Senator from Wyoming both oppose the Affordable Care Act and the law's expansion of Medicaid, but their own Republican Governor—the Governor of Wyoming—is using ObamaCare to expand health coverage for the people of Wyoming.

Wyoming Governor Matt Mead is proposing a Medicaid expansion that will help 17,000 people. Now, 17,000 people in the sparsely populated State of Wyoming is a lot of people. Governor Mead wrote this to the State legislature:

This economic boost would stabilize services and inject tax dollars paid by Wyoming citizens back into Wyoming communities. The numbers are compelling.

But apparently those facts are not compelling enough for the Senators from Wyoming, who are both voting for repeal.

The Republican Senator from North Dakota has also been a critic of the Affordable Care Act. Once again, his opposition does not jibe with what North Dakota's Governor is saying. North Dakota Governor Dennis Daugaard is fighting in the State legislature to expand Medicaid access to residents. He is a Republican and served for 10 years as JOHN HOEVEN's Lieutenant Governor, but Senator HOEVEN will vote for repeal.

The junior Senator from Montana is opposed to Medicaid expansion. Earlier in the month he seemed supportive of Montana's expansion of Medicaid saying:

I respect the decision of our Legislature and our governor on Medicaid expansion. I'm one who respects their rights and voices.

But today, I am told, he will perform a breathtaking about-face and vote to do away with Montana's health care.

There is a longer list. Republicans from Ohio, West Virginia, and the State of Nevada have all embraced Medicaid expansion.

In Nevada, Governor Brian Sandoval is considered by many to be a star in the Republican Party. But notwithstanding his party's anti-ObamaCare