

yesterday doing just that. It is curious how the senior Senator from Kentucky picks and chooses what he says about ObamaCare. He refuses to acknowledge the newly insured Kentuckians who have access to health care because of this law. Kentucky has 4.4 million people, and 500,000 of the Republican leader's constituents have health insurance because of ObamaCare. That is more than 11 percent of his State's population. ObamaCare is great.

The Affordable Care Act is helping the people of Kentucky and the people of America, regardless of what Republicans say here on the Senate floor, and they are rooting for failure.

To no one's surprise, this new census data also shows that the States that refused to expand Medicaid are the ones falling behind in health care. There are 19 Republican Governors doing just that. States that expanded Medicaid have insurance premium rates that are 7 percent lower than States that rejected Medicaid expansion. The States that did not expand Medicaid—States with Republican Governors and Republican legislatures—have an uninsured rate nearly twice as high as States that used ObamaCare to expand coverage. This is no coincidence. We know these policies work, but Republicans simply refuse to listen.

This is the attitude which led to Trump: Republican leaders insisted that no matter what President Obama suggested, it wouldn't work. And we have the filibusters to show that.

We know the truth. Thanks to the policies of President Obama and Democrats, we have emerged from the terrible recession. We are seeing record wage growth. We are making a great nation even greater. We don't hear about the successes as much as we should. Unfortunately, the press is oftentimes more interested in something more scandalous. As all this census data shows, we have moved our country forward, and we did it despite lots of Republican opposition. It is a shame that Republicans didn't help. They were too interested in opposing President Obama on everything. If they helped a little, America would be even greater.

We still have a lot to do. We need to do more for the middle class, more to give Americans a livable wage, and more to ease the burden of student loan debt. We need to work together to improve upon the many successes of the Affordable Care Act. If we had a token of an effort from Republicans, we could make the health care law even better and stronger. We must address the issue of gun violence and take steps to keep guns out of the hands of terrorists and criminals. We must do something about campaign finance reform. We must protect America from those who would turn America into a Russian oligarchy.

I hope my Republican colleagues will take this opportunity to stop being the party of Trump. The party of Trump,

whose pal is Putin—and he has even gone so far, obviously, as to suggest that maybe we should be an oligarchy also. I hope my Republican colleagues will take this opportunity to stop being the party of Trump, to stop being the party of no and work with us to build on the progress we have already made.

Mr. President, I ask that the leader time be reserved, and I ask the Chair to announce what we are going to do the rest of the day, or perhaps I should just suggest the absence of a quorum, which I will do until the Republican leader gets here.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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, with Senators permitted to speak therein until 11 a.m., with the time until 10:30 a.m. under the control of the Democrats, and the majority controlling the remainder of the time until 11 a.m.

#### GETTING OUR WORK DONE

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, once upon a time, there were elections and the people of this country, in their wisdom, decided to send a different party to the U.S. Senate as a majority. At that time, to much fanfare, the leader of the Republican Party announced that it was going to be a new day, that there was going to be regular order, that there was going to be a budget. There would be no filling the tree. We would do individual appropriations bills. Most notably, the leader said we were going to put in a full day's work. In fact, my colleagues can correct me if I'm wrong, but I think he even talked about working on Fridays in Washington.

Now, let me hasten to add that I know every Member of this body, when they go back to their homes in their States, they work. We have a lot of meetings to go to and people to see, so I don't mean to say that when we are not in session we are not working. But the American people were told that we would be putting in more work in Washington.

By the way, it is not as if we don't have work to do. I remember month

after month after month, all FOX News talked about was where was the budget. We had no budget. The law says you have to pass a budget. The Republicans over and over and over again, on this floor, on television: Where is the budget? Where is the budget?

Well, I ask that question now. Where is the budget? It hasn't been mentioned by my colleagues across the aisle lately. My colleagues can correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that the budget is required by law to be done in the spring, not during football season and certainly not at Christmas time.

The individual appropriations bills haven't worked out so well, either. The only ones they have been interested in doing are the ones that don't tackle the tough problem of balance; that is, the balance between our homeland security needs and our defense needs, the balance between the needs of educating our kids and making sure that our soldiers are well equipped.

But probably the thing that is most amazing is that in light of no hearing on Merrick Garland, in light of no budget, in light of no spending bills—in light of all of these things—we are working fewer days in Washington than we have in 60 years.

I showed this calendar to people at home, and they thought I was kidding. This is the calendar of our work schedule.

Now, let me also point out that we have heard this week that the leader of the Republican Party doesn't even want us to work these three days—October 4, 5, and 6—so mark a line through those, and the entire month of October is black. That means nothing is happening on the budget, nothing is happening on the Supreme Court vacancy, nothing is happening on oversight hearings, nothing is happening on appropriations, nothing is happening on Zika. Nothing is happening in Washington. I am just going to pause for a minute so anyone who has the C-SPAN bug can just look at this calendar. All the blacked-out days are days that we are not in Washington. A full week plus in January, a full week plus in February, almost two weeks in March, another two weeks in May, another almost week in June, almost 2½ weeks in July, the entire month of August. We didn't even work the full month of September. Now we are told we may not work any days in October. The calendar shows just a handful of days in November. There is a lot of business that has to be done by the end of the year, and obviously it looks like there are only a few days in December that we are working.

I think there are like 240 work days that most Americans work every year. By my estimate, I think we are working about 110 of those. No wonder the American people are angry. No wonder the American people don't get it. It is very simple. Not only is the Republican Senate not doing its job in terms of setting a history of not having even an up-or-down vote on the Supreme Court

nominee, the Republican Senate simply doesn't work.

I yield the floor to my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. I say thank you to Senator McCASKILL.

The Senator from Missouri is right. Folks in this country are sick and tired of Congress not doing its job.

I was just on the radio a few minutes ago and the radio announcer said: You know you guys have been out for several weeks. What do you anticipate you are going to get done over the next four weeks? I said: I wish we were in session during the next four weeks because the truth is there is a lot of stuff that needs to be done, but people are talking about getting out at the end of this week or the end of next week, and then that is it. That will be it until the lameduck, if we have one.

It seems as though this body runs based on the next election, not based on the policies that need to be passed to make this country do its job. We play political games after political games, worrying about the next election rather than worrying about the next generation.

The Senator from Missouri is right. This Republican-led Senate has not done its job.

Does a hard-working nurse wait until the next election day to insert the IV? No, she goes to work. You wouldn't hire that nurse if that happened.

Does the teacher walk into the classroom and say: You know, it is the middle of September, election day is November 8, so you guys don't have to come back to school until after the election? No. I served on a school board for a good number of years, and that teacher wouldn't have been working, wouldn't have been getting paid.

I will also tell my colleagues that I know firsthand a farmer would not wait for the polls to close to harvest his or her crop. If he or she did, they would be out of business.

We wonder why people are so upset with us. The American people have to do their job day in and day out, no matter what, and they expect the same from the people they elect to this body.

So what is the problem? The Republicans control the Senate. They control the House. Why can't we get anything done? I think it is because there is a total lack of leadership. We need to look no further than Zika and the current impasse and the political games that are being played with that. This is a horrible disease. I have talked with the researchers. They don't know all the impacts. We need to do the research to find that out. We do know that it impacts the unborn and it can be sexually transmitted. We don't know if there are long-term impacts to people who may get it now who don't see any symptoms but could see symptoms later.

We passed a bipartisan bill with 89 votes. We addressed this crisis head-on. But the Senate and the House leader-

ship got together, they shut the doors, they smoked a few cigars, probably ate a few steaks, and said: We are going to make this into a political football. And that is exactly what they did. They inserted partisan politics into a solution. Right now we have no bill passed that deals with the Zika crisis, and it is a health crisis in this country.

But that is not the only one. When I go back to Montana, whose population is fully 10 percent veterans, they talk about the needs of veterans. We have a bill, under the leadership of DICK BLUMENTHAL and JOHNNY ISAKSON, that takes care of our veterans. It helps fix the veterans' problems in this country. It helps fix leadership vacancies. It helps fix the shortage of doctors. It helps veterans get access to the VA. It passed out of committee unanimously. It is called the Veterans First Act. It passed out of committee last May, 125 days ago. The Senate will not take the bill up. It is a step in the right direction to take care of our veterans, yet we will not take it up because we have to go home.

My colleague from Missouri showed us the map. People would think Congress would do their job on behalf of veterans, but they would be wrong.

Then we have the Supreme Court. The Constitution—which people in this body cite a lot, and should—is very clear that the Senate has a duty to advise and consent to the President's Supreme Court nominees. I just heard the Republican leader the other day say that there will be no Supreme Court nominee taken up this year. That is great. Now the Supreme Court is just as dysfunctional as Congress. We see it with the decisions that come out on tally votes. Don't even give Judge Garland a meeting, much less a hearing.

I think the American people deserve better. They need an opportunity to see the nominee in action. My colleagues here in the Senate sit on their hands. It will be probably 15 months before the Supreme Court gets another nominee, and maybe not then either, because who knows what kind of antics are in store.

And there is more. We have not only Zika, the VA, and the Supreme Court but also the appropriations bills. Instead, we are going to pass a short-term resolution.

We have campaign finance. It is expected that more than \$1.4 billion will be spent in this Presidential race. Congress has done nothing to ensure that ideas and voters, not money, decide elections. We need campaign finance reform. Everybody in this body knows it. But, instead, we continue to ignore the problem that faces this country with campaign finance.

Wildfire disaster funding: The way we fight wildfires is broken. If you live in the West, you know that. We are not going to deal with that.

We need to permanently fund and reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund. No, it is not going to happen.

We have the Restoring Rural Residences Act that takes care of the doctor shortages we have in this country. No, it is not going to happen. We don't have time. We do have time; we just choose not to tackle any of these issues.

Year-round Pell grants: We have students who are coming out of college with a mountain of debt. We are not going to deal with that.

We have a bill to give regulatory relief to community banks and credit unions. We are not going to debate that on the floor. No, it is not going to happen.

We have the Secure Rural Schools initiative and Payment in Lieu of Taxes. Both need our attention. Earlier this year, Senator CRAPO and I called on leadership to find a path forward so these counties can have some certainty. Neither is going to happen.

Over the past few years we have seen our national security compromised with faulty background checks. We have a solution. We produced legislation that will help prevent inside attacks. It is not going to happen. Do you notice a pattern? Well, the whole country is waiting. We are waiting for Congress to do their job.

I just turned 60 years old on August 21. In my lifetime, we have never worked less days in the Senate than we have this year. It is unbelievable. We are leaving everyday Americans hung out to dry. We are leaving without doing our job. We are leaving because of the next election, and this is criminal.

There are solutions. This is supposed to be the greatest deliberative body in the world. The only problem is that we are not in session to deliberate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, there is an explanation for why we have worked the shortest number of days in the last 60 years. Everything must be fine. Everybody must be just great. Everybody must be working. Everybody must be able to afford college. The streets have to be safe. That would be a good reason not to work, if everything was just going great for the people of this country. But it is not. In poll after poll, people tell us that they are not happy with the direction of this country. Conversation after conversation we have with our constituents—as I did during our very, very long summer break—educates us as to the simple reality that people are struggling more today than ever before. People, families, and businesses are hurting out there. There are massive problems in this country, as Senator TESTER said, many of which have bipartisan solutions, and still we are not working. If everything were great, if there were no problems to be solved, then maybe that schedule would make sense. But that is not what people think in this country. They know the system is rigged against them. They know their lives can be

better, and they are furious, as Senator MCCASKILL pointed out, when they see that we are not even trying, that we are not even attempting to solve their problems because Republicans would rather be home than be working here in Washington.

Ask the family of Stefan Strawder if everything is OK. Stefan was one of the best basketball players in the State of Florida. He was a star basketball player on his high school team. His coach said everybody wanted to be like Stef. His 19-year-old sister said no matter where he went, everyone invited him into their home as if he was their own. Everybody loved him.

Stefan was killed this summer, while we were on break, in another mass shooting. This time it was in Florida at a teen party, when a bunch of kids left a teen party and kids from 12 years old to 17 years old were shot. Seventeen kids were shot. Stefan lost his life.

How about the 13 people who were shot in Bridgeport, CT, at the end of August? You haven't even heard about this. Thirteen people were shot at a party. None of them were killed, but 13 people's lives are permanently altered because of that mass shooting.

How about what happened this summer in Chicago? Four hundred people were shot in Chicago in the month of August alone. Think about that. That is the worst month of shootings in Chicago's history in the last two decades. People lost their lives. People like Arshell Dennis, who was coming home to surprise his mom on her birthday before he went back to take up his junior year at St. John's University, where he was majoring in journalism. He was shot while he was sitting on his front porch with a friend. He was a member of Upward Bound, a college prep program. He spent the previous summer as an ambassador mentoring other students. He wanted to help kids, he said, because "a lot of people where I'm from don't make it out."

There were 4,000 people killed in this country by guns while we were gone for the longest break in recent memory. There were 400 killed in 1 month in Chicago.

Here is what makes me so mad. I get it that this year we are not going to pass a bill increasing background checks or stopping terrorists from getting guns. We seem to have hit an end point there, but I listen to my Republican colleagues tell me all the time that the real problem, when it comes to gun violence, is mental health. I don't actually agree that this is the panacea for what ails this country when it comes to gun violence, but if we want to work on mental health, then we can. We have a bipartisan, comprehensive mental health bill that, like the veterans bill that Senator TESTER referenced, passed through the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee unanimously. Conservative Republicans and progressive Democrats supported it. It passed the House of Representatives and is sitting

pending on the floor of the Senate. What we are told is that we can't do a mental health reform bill not because we don't have consensus but because we don't have time—bull. We have time. We had all of July and all of August. We can stay here through September and October to pass a mental health reform bill that would probably pass unanimously in the Chamber and would bring new mental health resources to millions of people all across the country.

I am not going to tell you that I think that is what will solve the epidemic of mass shootings in this country, but it is just one of many pieces of legislation that will make people's lives better, that has broad bipartisan consensus, and that we aren't doing simply because we aren't working.

I thank Senator MCCASKILL for putting the chart out, tweeting it out, and letting the American people know that, for all of the lecturing we got from Republicans when we were in charge about not passing a budget or not moving forward on legislation that they supported, nothing is getting done right now simply because Republicans have made a choice to stop doing their job.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am joining with the others who are here on the floor today who have called on the majority leader of the Senate to stay here and to take action on matters of critical importance to the American people.

On the first Monday in October, the Supreme Court will begin its new term, and it will do so with a vacancy that has remained unfilled for the last 6 months. Regrettably, the President's nominee to the Court, Judge Merrick Garland, has not even been given the courtesy of a nomination hearing. This is the first time in the history of this country—in the history of the country—that the majority party in leadership has refused to have a hearing on a Supreme Court nominee. It is unconscionable. No wonder the people of America are frustrated with the Congress.

Likewise, the Senate has failed to act with urgency to address the Zika outbreak. I will have more to say about this shortly.

First and foremost, I wanted to come to the floor today to discuss the Senate's failure to provide appropriate emergency funding to address the heroin and opioid epidemic. This epidemic is raging in all 50 States. It is an uncontrolled public health epidemic of the first order. In 2014, some 47,000 people in this country died from drug overdoses—far more than we lose in motor vehicle accidents. Yet despite the staggering death toll, the majority in the Senate has failed to pass legislation to provide emergency funding to first responders, to treatment providers, to law enforcement, and to

those who are on the frontlines in this crisis.

In July, Congress passed the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, or CARA. It is a good bipartisan bill. It is a bill I cosponsored and I voted for. But as we all know here, if we are being honest with the public, CARA is an authorizing bill. It is not an appropriations bill. It doesn't provide one penny to fight the opioid epidemic. Even if Congress approves the funding necessary for CARA, it will be about 2 years before New Hampshire and other States see that additional funding.

In New Hampshire we have the highest percentage of overdose deaths in the country. Everywhere I go in the State, I hear that what people need is the resources to address this crisis. That is why early this year I introduced an emergency funding bill to provide an additional \$600 million for policing, prevention, treatment, and recovery. I offered this legislation as an amendment to the CARA bill, but it was defeated with only five of our Republican colleagues voting for it. Again, this is unconscionable. Our Nation has addressed other public health crises with emergency funding bills far larger than the one proposed to address the heroin and opioid epidemic.

Last year, about a year and a half ago, Congress passed nearly \$5.4 billion in emergency funding to combat the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. The Ebola outbreak killed one person in America. He wasn't an American. The heroin and opioid epidemic is killing more than 128 people every single day. We know that treatment is the only effective answer to the opioid addiction and that people are being turned away from treatment due to lack of resources. Nationwide in 2013, nearly 9 out of 10 people needing drug treatment didn't receive it. It is the same story on the law enforcement side of the equation. There is a chronic lack of resources.

Heroin traffickers expressly target rural States and counties where law enforcement is spread too thin and lacks resources to respond effectively—places such as northern New Hampshire and northern New England. My legislation would provide \$200 million in emergency funding for the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program, which is the flagship crimefighting program that has been cut year after year in a process that has been penny-wise and pound-foolish. It is budgeting at its very worst.

Meanwhile, as Congress fails to act, as Senator MCCASKILL has shown so well, as we have not been here to work, the opioid epidemic is on the verge of expanding dramatically.

Carfentanil is a synthetic opioid that is used to tranquilize elephants. It is now available on the streets and is blamed for a record surge in drug overdoses in the Midwest. Carfentanil is 100 times more potent than fentanyl. Fentanyl is an additive that we have

seen turning up in New Hampshire and in so many other places that makes heroin 50 times more deadly. Until recently, Hamilton County, OH, had four or five overdoses a day. Now, because of carfentanil, the county is reporting 20, 30, or sometimes even 50 overdoses a day, completely overwhelming first responders.

Some public health officials say that the United States has reached a disastrous inflection point in the opioid epidemic. Going forward, we may be seeing more and more synthetic opioids in the market that are cheaper, more potent, more addictive, and even more deadly. This is just one more wake-up call.

The hour is late, and as I travel across New Hampshire and talk to Senate colleagues from across the country, again and again I hear about the lack of resources to marshal an effective, well-coordinated response. As the new and more dangerous synthetic opioids hit the streets, the crisis is becoming exponentially worse, and Congress's failure to act, the fact that we are, again, going home very soon means that more people will die before we take action.

If Congress can spend billions to fight an Ebola outbreak in a distant continent, surely we can allocate \$600 million to combat a raging epidemic back home if we stayed here and if we worked together to get this done.

I also want to raise the issue of the Zika outbreak, as my colleagues have—again, this is one more area—because, while the Senate has been out of session, while Congress has been out of session, while we have been at a standstill, Zika has been on the move with tragic consequences.

Local transmission of Zika is now taking place in the State of Florida. According to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 1,750 pregnant women in the United States and Puerto Rico have tested positive for the Zika virus, and that means their babies are at risk. We are not even sure exactly what all their babies might be at risk for because we are still trying to get the research to determine what all of the impacts of Zika are.

We know microcephaly is one of the birth defects that results from the Zika virus. Since January, I have joined with other Senators in calling for a robust response to the Zika outbreak because we need Congress to act. In fact, the Senate did act. We acted before we went out in August with a bipartisan vote of 89 people, but then we saw the House—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democrats' time has expired.

Ms. SHAHEEN. Now it is time to put politics aside and work together, to stay here and do what the American people need.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I understand the Senator from North Da-

kota would like 2 or 3 minutes to speak. I will be glad to yield to her.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I thank my great friend the senior Senator from Tennessee, always the statesman and always willing to engage in wonderful debate, a great Member of this body.

I thank my colleague from Missouri for shining a bright light on this issue. The Senate work Calendar she displayed is honestly breathtaking. In fact, we are on track to work the fewest number of days in 60 years. That doesn't look like a work schedule anyone from North Dakota has—not that they would not want that but that they have. It should not be a work schedule for the important work that is being done in the Senate.

We are out more than we are in. We were elected to a job, but the Senate is refusing to do that job. In the meantime, the opioid crisis, as my great friend the Senator from New Hampshire has outlined, is destroying families across this country and certainly in North Dakota. When I held discussions throughout my State, mothers and fathers who had lost children to this crisis pleaded for resources to save other families from losing their children.

Their stories brought police chiefs to tears. One even watched his own son serve as a pallbearer for his 19-year-old best friend who had succumbed to addiction. Another man I spoke to became addicted after he dislocated his shoulder when he was just 14. Soon he began dislocating his own shoulder to obtain prescription drugs that washed away the pain of social situations.

This Congress has failed to provide the funding we need to take on the opioid crisis. Now we are headed for the door. Senator MANCHIN, along with a number of us, has introduced a bill that would add just a small cost to prescription drugs, opioids that are prescribed—1 cent per milligram—and put it in a fund.

Shockingly, 1 cent per milligram actually raises over \$1 billion. It tells you how rampant prescriptions for opioids are. So we need to have a debate on that bill. We can't say we are concerned about the opioid crisis unless we come for resources to treat addiction and help our communities get well. I think my police chief in Fargo said it best. He can't protect a community until he heals a community. We have a role in making that happen.

Last month, I also met with 100 North Dakota retirees who stand to lose as much as half of their pensions, sometimes more, after dedicating years of their lives to backbreaking labor, all to support a secure future for their family, and they saw it all disappear in the blink of an eye. That is why we have been calling on Congress to step in and come up with a bipartisan solution to protect the workers and their families who paid into the Central States Pension Plan.

While working to make the fund solvent across the country, nearly one-half million hard-working retirees face cuts through no fault of their own. As one retiree who drove a truck for 30 years put it, "If you cut my pension 50 percent, I am no longer in the middle class."

Are you going to kick 400,000 people out of the middle class? Is that what Congress is prepared to do, even when Members of this body have the power and actually the responsibility and duty to do something about it? We are headed for the exits, but American families are dealing with the heart-breaking loss of children, they have lost their savings that they worked their entire lives to earn, lost their retirement security.

The Senate—instead of dealing with these issues, we simply are not doing our job. What are Members of this Congress going to tell American families—dealing with tough decisions on how to move forward—when they return home for our recess? How are they going to look them in the eyes and explain the possibility of this scheduling getting truncated even more?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Instead of working until October 7, the majority is wrapping up in the next week. So I just ask that we stay here, that we do our job, that we restore the faith the American public has in our democracy, and that we are addressing the issues we are responsible to address.

I thank my friend from Tennessee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

#### ZIKA VIRUS FUNDING

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I have been listening carefully to my friends on the other side of the aisle. Zika is truly an epidemic. It is terrifying young families all across the country who are worried their babies might be born with a birth defect. We are working hard to fund the creation of a vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tells us that is likely to happen in the next year and a half.

It takes a certain amount of creativity for the Democratic Senators to come to the floor and complain about the Senate not doing our job on Zika funding when three separate times the majority leader and Republicans have offered \$1.1 billion in funding for Zika, and the Democratic Senators have refused to allow a vote.

Let me say that again. Republican Senators had offered \$1.1 billion in funding for Zika early in the summer, at a time when mosquitoes were flying, and the Democratic Senators have said: No, you can't even vote on it. This \$1.1 billion, passed by the House, we are ready to vote on it here, and they have said no.

Let's be straight up about this. We regard it as an urgent problem. Three