

avoided. Our Democratic colleagues need to once again acknowledge this, as so many of them did when it came to our outdated Tax Code, as I pointed out. There is no reason why tax reform can't be bipartisan, and if our colleagues just returned to some of their statements, which I have highlighted here—if they returned to those policies in a bipartisan fashion and worked with us, we could change our Tax Code for the better. We could make it simpler. We could make sure individuals have lower tax rates so they could have more take-home pay from the wages they earn and, in the process, improve their standard of living for themselves and their families. Finally, we could become more competitive in a global economy where the highest tax rate in the world does not serve American interests well. It doesn't serve the interests of American businesses well, and it doesn't serve the interests of American workers or taxpayers either.

We can do this. All it takes is political will. All it takes is approaching this in a fashion that benefits all Americans on a nonpartisan basis. I hope our colleagues will listen.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

LAS VEGAS MASS SHOOTING

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, the aftermath of Las Vegas is a time for this Senator to reflect on whether a shooting is like Mateen's, in the Orlando nightclub, where he was motivated as a terrorist, and then there was the remarkable recovery of Congressman SCALISE in the attempted killing of SCALISE by a shooter who was motivated by politics, and then there is the massive massacre in Las Vegas, apparently by a shooter who was mentally deranged in some form. The fact is, massive amounts of ammunition with high-caliber, rapid-fire assault weapons is making this easier for whatever the motivation of the shooter is. As a result, you get to the point of, how many more of these do we have before you say enough is enough?

That leads to the subject of politics. When does humanity overtake the divisiveness of our politics so we can come together and have a commonsense discussion about what should be done? Because if we don't, and humanity does not overtake our politics, we will continue, and it will be more of the same.

So I ask—I yearn for that public but also private discussion with our colleagues because going down this road over and over again is not going to be the answer, and we ought to say enough is enough.

(The remarks of Mr. NELSON pertaining to the introduction of S. 1907

are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions."

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING LOUIS J. AMABILI

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Lou Amabili, a true Delawarean, a fantastic, dedicated, and tireless volunteer, a gentleman who dedicated his life and service to others.

Mr. Louis J. Amabili, the son of Italian immigrants, rose from volunteering at his local volunteer fire company to become one of the most important and trusted voices in the American fire service. Lou passed away last Thursday, September 28.

Lou was a giant in the fire service community, and his decades of dedicated service are a testament to how much he cared about his calling and his neighbors. Lou was a legend in the Delaware firefighting community, especially in my small hometown of Hockessin, DE. Lou proudly served the Hockessin Fire Company for 70 years, holding every position one could possibly hold—chief engineer, first and second assistant chief, along with vice president, president, president emeritus, and director.

Lou was a humble, down-to-earth, passionate, and caring gentleman. He rarely sought the limelight, even as he was often thrust into it. He could walk into any event, whether a national convention or just a local meeting, and know an individual's name, making them feel as if they were the most important person in the room.

Lou embodied the term "public servant," which so many of us aspire to, yet he quietly and with dignity achieved this for decades. He heard his calling to serve his community, and he embraced it with dedication and a quiet passion.

There was no greater ally of firefighters in Delaware or across the country than Lou. His continued service of seven-plus decades set the highest standard of dedication to the volunteer fire service.

I first had the honor of meeting Lou around 2000 when I was county council president. Over my decade of service in New Castle County government, Lou was a frequent source of powerful advice, encouragement, insight, and occasional correction. I always looked forward to seeing him, whether at a county meeting, a State meeting, or at a national organization meeting. I was always certain I would get honest, direct, and constructive feedback from Lou about how things were going at home and how things were going nationally for America's firefighters.

Lou's nationally recognized service is long and impressive. He first gained national recognition in the fire service when President Richard Nixon appointed him to serve on the National Commission for Fire Prevention and Control in 1970—the Commission that produced the landmark report, "America Burning."

A graduate of Conrad High School and of the University of Delaware with a degree in chemistry, Lou was appointed the first director of the Delaware State Fire School in 1964 and served in that capacity for more than three decades through 1996. Upon his retirement, then-Governor TOM CARPENTER, my senior Senator, signed a resolution naming the Delaware State Fire School the Louis J. Amabili Fire Training Center.

From 1973 to 1980, Lou served as president of the International Society of Fire Service Instructors. From 1978 to 1986, he served as a charter member of the National Fire Academy Board of Visitors. Lou also served on the NFPA board of directors for 6 years in the 1980s and was chairman of the Fire Department Instructors Conference in 1979 and 1980.

Widely respected by his colleagues, the president of Congressional Fire Services Institute, William F. Jenaway, said:

Throughout his entire career, Lou was fully committed to the health and safety of the men and women who have served in the fire service. He was always willing and eager to share his knowledge with both aspiring and veteran firefighters and cared deeply about preserving the fire service's rich heritage. It was an honor to serve with him for many years on the CFSI Board of Directors. I valued his friendship as did my fellow board members. . . . His contributions to our organization and to the nation's fire service will preserve his legacy as a legendary leader for many years to come.

While the fire service and the safety of his fellow firefighters was his passion, his family was his love. Lou's wife of nearly 60 years, Carmella, was his constant companion as he traveled extensively to national conventions, local meetings, or speaking engagements. Lou's daughter Janice; his son Louis Junior and his wife Bridget; his grandson Louis J. Amabili III and his wife Lacie; and Lou's great-grandchildren, Lyza and Silas, will be forever proud of his legacy of service to Hockessin, to Delaware, and to our Nation.

Lou was an inspiration to generations of volunteers, first responders, and firefighters, not just in his home company in our small town of Hockessin but to all the firefighters of Delaware and our country.

Lou Amabili was exactly the sort of man on whom the safety of our Nation has been built and whose service and dedication to his community and his neighbors will never be forgotten.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). The Senator from Louisiana.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to talk a little bit about Social Security and, specifically, about the windfall elimination provision and the government pension offset. Now, I know that sounds real technical, but, basically, here is the problem.

We have a lot of Americans who have paid into Social Security who are now getting screwed by Social Security. They are not getting their money back. All of us want to do everything we can to maintain the stability and sanctity of the Social Security system, and I think all of us believe that we all ought to get the Social Security payments that we are entitled to. That is all this issue is about. Let me explain.

For many middle-class Americans, receiving Social Security at retirement is sort of like a welcoming light at the end of the tunnel. They have worked hard, they have retired, and now they are entitled to some of the money back that they paid into the Social Security system. I am talking, of course, about the hard-working women and the hard-working men who have seen a chunk of their monthly earnings go into the Social Security system throughout their entire careers—10, 15, 20, and sometimes 30 and 40 years. These same Americans have not seen a pay raise or an increase in their median household income for a long time. The median household income in America today, as the Presiding Officer knows, is pretty much the same as it was in 1999.

I guess whom I am talking about are ordinary people. You can call it the middle class, if you would like, or working families. They were the ones who were hit the hardest by the great recession of 2008. They have been struggling throughout their lives to participate in the great wealth of this Nation. They are entitled to participate in the great wealth of this Nation, and they should not have to keep on struggling to get money for retirement from the Social Security system when they have already paid into the Social Security system.

The principle behind Social Security is pretty simple. Throughout your working life, you pay some money and your employer pays some money. When you are done working, or when you retire, according to a formula, you get your money back through a Social Security check. It is simple in theory. You put money in, and when you hit the retirement age, you get some of it back, except that for 1.7 million Americans, that is not the case. That is not how the system works for them. That includes about 38,000 hard-working folks in my home State of Louisiana, but there are a lot more in other States as well. I am talking about millions of teachers, police officers, firefighters, and a lot of other folks who earn modest pensions in service to their communities who face little or no access to Social Security.

Here is what I am talking about. I am talking about a teacher who paid

into the Social Security system. I am talking about teachers or firefighters or policemen who paid into their own retirement systems. So they are rocking along. They are, basically, paying into two retirement systems—Social Security and the private retirement system. They are doing the right thing in getting up every day, going to work, obeying the law, and trying to save money for retirement. It is deferred gratification. They are ready to retire, but because they were prudent enough to invest in a private retirement system, they do not get their Social Security check even though they have already paid into it. Additionally, a worker can pass away before reaching retirement age not even knowing that his spouse and children will not have full access to his Social Security survivors' benefits. That is just not right.

Until 2005, there was not even a legal requirement for human resources to notify workers that switching careers would affect their eligibility for Social Security or Social Security survivors' benefits. Many of these 1.7 million Americans who are getting screwed tried to do the right thing. They paid into a private retirement system, and they paid into Social Security only to find out later that they can get their money from the private retirement system but that they cannot get their money from Social Security. They are being punished for being prudent. Many of them retire with no idea that that is the law. By then, of course, it is too late.

In June of this year, one in six Americans collected Social Security benefits, and I am happy for every one of them because, to collect, they had to pay in. That is about 61 million Americans. By 2031, when the last of the baby boomers hits retirement age, that number is going to increase to about 75 million Americans. These are going to be our seniors. They are our seniors, and they are our seniors to be. They are battling against the rising costs of housing, healthcare, automobiles, taxes, and fees. Many of them have had their private retirement accounts or home values wrecked by the great recession. Yet these Americans press on.

When we talk about tax reform—and we are going to be talking a lot about tax reform here over the next few weeks—we need to make clear that we are talking about reforms that will help these middle-class Americans. They are the people who get up every day, go to work, obey the law, and try to do the right thing by their kids and teach their kids morals and try to save a little money for retirement.

Let me be blunt. I would like to eliminate the windfall elimination provision and the government pension offset in the Social Security office. I think it would be a vital step in ensuring that our middle-class seniors can enjoy continued economic security after their retirements. Not only would it help the economy, but it is the right thing to do.

I sum up. We can provide economic relief immediately to some of those middle-class retirees about whom I have been talking by eliminating the windfall elimination provision and the government pension offset of the Social Security system. It will not cost much money. It will have a small effect on the cost of Social Security, at about 0.13 percent—not 13 percent but 0.13 percent. It is a little over one-tenth of 1 percent.

After taking care of this simple fix, which is more than about money—it is about fairness—we can turn our eyes to out-of-control Washington spending to ensure that Social Security remains a reliable source of retirement income for Americans in the long term.

Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAX REFORM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, a recent survey reported that 50 percent of people in this country consider themselves living paycheck to paycheck, and one third of these people say they are just \$400 away from financial crisis. That is not acceptable.

Unfortunately, after 8 years of economic stagnation under the Obama administration, living paycheck to paycheck is starting to feel like the new normal for most Americans. But it doesn't have to be. We have the resources to be the strongest economy in the world. American workers and job creators are as dynamic and creative as ever, and they can get our economy thriving again. In order to get them to do that, we need to clear some obstacles in their path. That starts with reforming our complicated and outdated Tax Code, which has increasingly been strangling our economy.

This month, Republicans in the House and Senate are making comprehensive tax reform one of our top priorities. After weeks of work, last week leaders from the Senate, the House, and the White House unveiled the framework that will guide our final tax reform legislation.

The framework is built around Republicans' five principles for tax reform: first, providing tax relief for the middle class; second, increasing wages, jobs, and economic growth; third, keeping good-paying jobs here at home in America; fourth, increasing American competitiveness in the global economy; and, finally, fifth, simplifying the Tax Code. The framework outlines our plans to provide relief for middle-class families.

First, we will lower rates for hard-working Americans. By collapsing the seven income tax brackets to three, we will ensure that working families get