

So I thank my colleague for her wise words this morning.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I want to talk about a number of subjects starting, of course, with the fact that millions of Americans have lost their health insurances because of the unintended consequences of the Affordable Care Act, or ObamaCare.

We also know that in addition to losing the coverage they had, which they were told they could keep, many have now been forced to pay higher premiums. The sticker shock from that has been something we have been reading a lot about. But whether there is sticker shock because of the higher premiums, many people have been finding that their deductibles are huge, making them effectively self-insured up to \$5,000 for their health care costs, definitely not something they were promised as a result of ObamaCare.

We also know that roughly 10 million people, about 10½ million people, remain unemployed in America and that 3.8 million of them have been unemployed for more than 6 months. Since the recession has ended—and, of course, a recession is, technically speaking, two consecutive quarters of negative growth—I think, if asked, most Americans today feel as though we are still in a recession because of what is happening to them personally. We know that since the recession ended, median household income—one measure of economic health in the country—has gone down by \$2,500. So at the same time people are experiencing higher costs for health care, for groceries, for gasoline, and other necessities of life, they are seeing that their median household income has declined by \$2,500—a double whammy.

According to a Joint Economic Committee analysis, if the Obama economic recovery had been as strong as an average post-1960 recovery, we would currently have millions more private sector jobs.

I had the pleasure this last weekend of hearing a fascinating debate with Larry Summers, economic adviser and former president of Harvard University—a brilliant economist—and another brilliant economist, Senator Phil Gramm, who taught at Texas A&M. Senator Gramm was making the point that if we had had a typical recovery after a recession, it would have been a V-shaped recovery. We did not get that. The economy continues to grow slowly, unusually slowly, and they were both exploring the reasons for that. A lot has to do with uncertainty about the role of the Federal Government when it comes to taxes, when it comes to regulation, and when it comes to our escalating national debt—now over \$17 tril-

lion—and what that might mean in the future.

But add all this up and Americans are continuing to feel increasingly pessimistic about the state of our economy, the state of their personal health care relationships with their doctors and hospitals, and the future of the country. That is something all of us ought to be profoundly concerned about.

Yet rather than promote real health care reform that actually deals with the unaffordability of health coverage or something that will get the economy growing again, my friends across the aisle, many of them, spent last night—all night—talking about climate change. That is right, climate change.

So the message to millions of people out of work or who have lost their health coverage or to people who are living from paycheck to paycheck because median household income has actually declined is that what America really needs right now is more taxes and more regulation and the big government that goes along with it.

It is easy to see why many people think Washington is just out of touch with the concerns of average hard-working American families, and last night was an example. It is hard to square the message with the genuine concern for the middle class and middle-class prosperity. I mean, if we are really concerned about hardworking American families working from paycheck to paycheck just to make ends meet, I doubt we would have an all-night debate on climate change.

If my friends across the aisle really did believe that job creation should be our top priority, they wouldn't have wasted precious time with last night's political stunt. For that matter, they wouldn't be opposing the Keystone XL Pipeline, which would single-handedly create thousands of well-paying American jobs.

I realize that many people have good-faith concerns about the long-term implications of rising greenhouse gas emissions. Over the next three decades worldwide emissions are indeed projected to surge. But that has almost nothing to do with the United States and almost everything to do with developing countries such as China. As a matter of fact, the ranking member of the energy committee, the Senator from Alaska, and certainly the Senator from Wyoming know this very well. One of the reasons why carbon emissions in the United States are going down is because of the natural gas renaissance we have seen—because of unconventional shale gas exploration in places such as Texas and all around the country. So we are finding ways to reduce carbon emissions for those who are worried about those, as a result of taking advantage of the resources we have here in the United States, together with the innovative technology that is used to develop it.

Those of us who oppose bigger, more intrusive government in the form of

cap and trade legislation or higher taxes such as carbon taxes or other job-killing greenhouse gas regulations are not denialists. I prefer to say we are realists.

We understand America's contributions to global emissions over the coming decades will be relatively minuscule. We understand the economic costs of President Obama's regulations through the Environmental Protection Agency would vastly outweigh the environmental benefit.

So why do they want to put a big wet blanket on the economy and on the aspirations and dreams of hard-working families in order to pursue policies in which the negative will vastly outweigh the positive benefit to American families?

In fact, the Obama EPA itself has admitted its proposed greenhouse gas rule would not have a notable impact on U.S. carbon dioxide emissions until the year 2022.

I would also note, despite having Members of his party talk about climate change all night—which is all it was, talk—there is no legislation they are offering, nor will the majority leader, who controls the agenda of the Senate, bring legislation to the floor to actually vote on it. So it is just talk or, perhaps I can say, it was just a lot of hot air.

Our colleagues across the aisle—including the majority leader who controls the agenda of the floor in the Senate—seem to be content letting the President use his pen and phone, skirting the legislative process, not engaging with Congress to try to do things which actually are the priorities of the American people but instead to rely on unelected EPA bureaucrats. I could be surprised, but I would be surprised to learn if the consensus in America wouldn't be that we should be focusing on policies which create jobs, rather than destroy jobs and punish families in return for meager or nonexistent benefits.

Speaking of destroying jobs and punishing families, the Congressional Budget Office—which is the official budgetary scorekeeper for Congress—recently estimated the President's proposal to raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour would actually destroy up to 1 million jobs.

I believe sometimes here in Washington people think those who actually create jobs can absorb regulations, taxes, and other economic burdens, together with the uncertainty many of those policies cause, and it will have no impact on their ability to continue to create jobs, grow jobs or to grow the economy. But the Congressional Budget Office has stated what should perhaps be intuitive, which is, if you raise the cost of doing business on businesses, they are going to have to find someplace to cut.

What that means is they are going to have to cut more people from their jobs. They estimated up to 1 million people would lose their job if we raised

the minimum wage 40 percent to \$10.10 an hour.

Remember, in the President's State of the Union Message he said a minimum wage hike like that would help low-income families. It is certainly a mystery to me how it would help a low-income family who is relying on a wage earner to provide income when they end up losing their job as a result of the policy.

So the President's definition of "help" is unique, to say the least, because any policy which destroys up to 1 million jobs would be an absolute disaster for low-income families.

The President also made his pitch for a higher minimum wage in the context of his concern about income inequality. He claims to be greatly concerned about income inequality. Yet his policies actually threaten to make it worse.

But don't take my word for it. A news report from a major labor union argues that in its current form, the President's health care law will "heighten the inequality that the administration seeks to produce."

These are not political adversaries of our President and his party. These are supporters of the Affordable Care Act—ObamaCare—who have now said in its current form, unless changed, the Affordable Care Act—or ObamaCare—will heighten the inequality the administration seeks to reduce.

The report also notes that ObamaCare "threatens the middle class with higher premiums, loss of hours, and a shift from part-time work and less comprehensive coverage."

I think those would be very troubling words to the President and his allies who passed the Affordable Care Act—or ObamaCare—but so far they have fallen on deaf ears.

Again, this report just in terms of its credibility was not issued by some Republican or conservative organization which was opposed to ObamaCare from the beginning. It was issued by a labor union which supported ObamaCare which has now found that what was promised has not actually been delivered in terms of its implication.

So what union members and their families are learning the hard way is the promise of ObamaCare is very different from the reality. We were promised ObamaCare would actually expand coverage, it would reduce costs, it would help our economy, all without disrupting existing health care arrangements.

In reality, the law has forced millions to lose their coverage and forced millions to pay higher premiums or higher deductibles, effectively being self-insured. Meanwhile, the Congressional Budget Office projects it will effectively shrink America's labor force by 2.5 million full-time workers over the next decade.

Remarkably, the administration now wants us to believe it is actually a good thing so many people are reducing their work hours in order to keep their

government-mandated health care. For example, chief White House economist Jason Furman has said working less to keep ObamaCare benefits "might be a better choice and a better option than what they had before."

Of course, they don't have a choice to keep what they had before because they have been forced into ObamaCare. If you don't buy the government-mandated insurance, then you are going to be fined by your friendly Federal Government.

But think about it: The White House chief economist is celebrating the possibility of a dramatic decline in American work hours. I would remind Mr. Furman that America's labor force participation is already at historic lows. It is as low as it has been for 30 years. In other words, the percentage of people looking for work in America is at a 30-year low already, and Mr. Furman is celebrating the further depressing impact of ObamaCare on work in America.

All else being equal, a reduction in work hours means a reduction in economic growth. It certainly means a reduction in income for the people working. We know a further reduction of economic growth will make it harder to create new jobs, improve living standards, and achieve broad-based prosperity—something I know we all hope for in America.

This is a dangerous cycle, and it is definitely not something we should be celebrating. It is something we should be fixing.

A truly compassionate agenda—not one that focuses on things which are largely irrelevant to the lives of Americans working families, but a truly compassionate agenda would seek to improve opportunity rather than encourage dependency. A truly compassionate agenda would place a much higher value on the dignity and self-reliance of American workers by making sure they have jobs.

For that matter, a truly compassionate agenda would aim to dismantle ObamaCare and replace it with patient-centered alternatives which encourage work and encourage job creation.

The type of agenda I have described is pretty much the exact opposite of what we have seen over the last 5 years, and the results speak for themselves. There is absolutely no reason we have to accept the status quo. With the right mix of economic policies, America can turn this ship around and restore the strong growth rates and robust job creation we enjoyed in the 1980s and 1990s. We will on this side of the aisle continue to promote such policies, and we look forward to working with our colleagues across the aisle when they finally come around to the realization the path we are heading on now is not one the American people are happy with or that they have to settle for.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

THE THREE ES

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I congratulate my colleague from Texas for his comments, and I agree with his concerns. These are the same concerns I hear at home in Wyoming.

I was in Buffalo, WY, at a health fair this past weekend. Hundreds of people from the community turned out. They have concerns about the health care law. They have concerns about their take-home pay. They have concerns about their jobs. And Wyoming is an energy State.

I am the only Republican Senator who is both on the energy committee as well as the Environment & Public Works Committee, and so I think about the three Es: energy security, economic growth, and environmental stewardship. We need energy security for our country, economic growth for our citizens, as well as to protect the environment and be good stewards of the land. I believe in Wyoming we continue to do all of those.

The American people have made it very clear that what they want from Washington is a focus on jobs and the economy. This is not what I have heard, though, over the last 24 hours from the Democrats on the other side of the aisle. The American people I talk to want us to make it easier for them to get back to work, to provide for their families, to get the kids back to school so they can go off to work. People's jobs are linked to their identity, to their dignity, to their self-worth. I think more of these regulations make it harder for people to have a job, to keep a job, and to provide for their families.

So we had an all-night talkathon, and what did it accomplish? To me, the only accomplishment was a waste of time and more hot air. It seemed to be a dog-and-pony show to satisfy their big liberal donors.

The majority leader spent part of the weekend in California with a big liberal donor who has promised \$100 million to the Democrats on the issue they decided to hold an entire night talkathon on. They had five or six Democratic Senators at this man's home in California basically saying: We want your money. We want your money. This is what the Democrats did.

So they put on an entire dog-and-pony show, showing that Democrats and their leadership—including the majority leader—is beholden to that liberal money that wants to call the tune for this Senate.

It is astonishing this would happen in the United States; that the majority leader of the Senate would take a number of Democratic Senators to California specifically to go to the home of somebody who says: I want to give \$100 million to promote what he said was his agenda—his agenda—and make the majority leader dance to that tune. This is what we saw for the last 24 hours.

The majority leader could call a vote tomorrow—he could call it today—on a