

Senator PORTMAN, my Republican colleague from Ohio, and I and Senator MANCHIN and Senator CAPITO, a Democrat and a Republican from West Virginia, and Senator CASEY—a number of us—said: We should not leave Washington to go home to our families until we take care of mine worker families.

Congress has the power to stop these cuts and to live up to this pledge. We had a bipartisan solution that would have passed if it had been brought to the floor. But instead, Congress broke its promise to these miners and their families. Congress stole the health care they had earned by passing a continuing resolution that failed to address the pension problem, and it stole the funds that were still left in their health care plan to pay for a 4-month fix—4 months, 4 months. Who can make health care decisions when you don't know if you will have health care coverage 4 months from now?

These working people don't deserve to live with this kind of uncertainty. I have heard my colleagues, particularly on the Republican side of the aisle, always talk about predictability. Government should never inject more uncertainty into the lives of individuals, never should inject uncertainty into the lives of business people as they make investment decisions.

But that is what we have done with these mine workers. We have made their lives less certain, less predictable, and their health care so unpredictable. This is the health care these workers fought for, the health care they sacrificed raises for. Keep in mind that at the bargaining table, workers will be willing to accept less wages today in exchange for health care and pensions in the future. That is what collective bargaining is often about. That is what is so important.

This is health care they sacrificed raises for. It was the health care we promised them. My colleagues know their stories of hard work and sacrifice. We know these stories because over the past year, these miners traveled here by the busload. They rode long distances. They gathered in the heat and in the cold for hours outside this building to make their voices heard.

They worked decades in the mines—hard back-breaking work. But that work had dignity. It was dangerous work—work where some of them were killed on the job, work where many of them developed health problems later. Many of them died younger than people who dress like we do and have jobs like this. Their widows have been denied these pensions and health care. They clocked in every day, these workers. They knew the conditions they faced. Many of them now suffer from black lung or other illnesses. They accepted a lifetime of hard labor because they valued their jobs, they valued their work, and they believed that good-paying union jobs were their tickets to the middle class.

These miners believed in the covenant we used to have in this country

that promised if you work hard your whole life, if you put in the hours, if you save a little and do your part, you will be able to help your children go to college. They believed that would give their kids a chance at a better life perhaps than they had. They believed that if they upheld their end of the deal, if they put in the work to power our country by mining coal used for a generation of electricity, their government would do the same. In December, Congress told them they were wrong. I don't accept that. These workers sacrificed their lungs and their backs to keep our lights on. It is shameful that Congress, despite all intents and purposes, has stolen what they earned. These miners should have spent Christmas with their grandkids, not worrying about whether they could afford their medicine.

We aren't giving up. We had a bipartisan solution in December. We will keep fighting until mine workers across Ohio and this country have the full health care and retirement security that we promised them. They kept faith with us and powered our country. It is time to keep faith with the workers in our industrial heartland and to right this wrong.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time during the ensuing quorum call be divided equally between the two sides.

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

Mr. BROWN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### TRIBUTE TO LARRY CLARK

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for the first time in three decades, the Kentucky General Assembly began their regular session this month without the fiery voice and passionate character of State Representative Larry

Clark. After an impressive career, Representative Clark started a new adventure: retirement. He will be remembered for many accomplishments in Frankfort, among them that he never missed a single floor vote.

Despite our differences, Representative Clark and I both care deeply for Kentucky. As speaker pro tempore of the house, he championed the merger of the Louisville and Jefferson County governments, an issue I fought for when I was the county judge/executive. We also share a passion for the University of Louisville, and Representative Clark has a record of achievements on behalf of the school.

I join the Kentucky General Assembly in congratulating Representative Clark on his career of public service. He dedicated many years to Kentucky, and I wish him well in retirement.

#### TRIBUTE TO ROBERT L. HENDRICKSON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today I wish to celebrate a distinguished Kentuckian and a friend. Robert L. Hendrickson has been the Publisher of the *Ledger Independent* in Maysville, KY, since 1993. When Bob announced that he would retire at the end of last year, I knew that the paper was not only losing a great journalist, but it also was losing a great man.

Bob graduated from the University of Georgia's Henry Grady School of Journalism. Afterward, he moved back to Kentucky to work on his dad's dairy farm. However, a pair of harsh winters in 1977 and 1978 convinced him, in his own words, "to put my journalism degree to work." He got hired by the *Ledger Independent* and has served his community ever since.

The *Ledger Independent* newspaper serves seven counties in northern Kentucky and southern Ohio. Through a series of owners and publishers, the paper continues a 150-year tradition of a local, independent, daily newspaper in Maysville.

Bob became editor of the paper in 1985, calling it "the best job in the world." In 1993, he was promoted to publisher. He oversaw the entire operation and guided the paper into the internet age with the unveiling of *Maysville Online*. While working full time at the paper, Bob also did post-graduate work at Northwestern University.

Bob and Missy Mann have never stopped working for their neighbors. Bob further dedicates himself to his community, both through his service on the board of directors of the Maysville Chamber of Commerce, and as the moderator of several important political debates in his area.

Bob is a great man and a pillar of his community, and I am honored to call him a friend. I wish him and Missy well in retirement, and I join with countless Kentuckians on thanking him for his service to Maysville.