an appreciation for the effects of decisions.

His was the first Supreme Court nomination on which I have been privileged to vote. I have never regretted supporting his confirmation. Just as I reached across the political aisle to vote for Justice Stevens, Justice O'Connor, and Justice Souter, who were nominated by Republican Presidents, I have urged Senate Republicans to fairly consider President Obama's nominations.

Justice Stevens has written important decisions upholding the power of Congress to pass legislation to protect hard-working Americans. He brought to his opinions a keen understanding of the distinct roles set forth in our Constitution for courts and for our democratically elected Congress, and a respect for both. In Gonzales v. Raich and in Tennessee v. Lane, Justice Stevens authored the Supreme Court's opinions upholding Congress' actions. I suspect these precedents will be even more important as the Supreme Court continues to examine laws passed by Congress to protect Americans from discriminatory health insurance policies and fraudulent Wall Street practices.

A decade ago, the Supreme Court overreached and unnecessarily waded into the political thicket to award the presidency in a close election to George W. Bush. In his dissent, Justice Stevens lamented that the decision would damage the Court's reputation and it did. He noted: ''Although we may never know with complete certainty the identity of the winner of this year's Presidential election, the identity of the loser is perfectly clear. It is the Nation's confidence in the judge as an impartial guardian of the rule of law.''

While the public's memory of that partisan decision was receding, it came rushing back when the Supreme Court issued another election-related decision in the Citizens United case. In Citizens United, five conservative, activist Justices overturned a century of law to empower corporations to overwhelm and distort the democratic process by using corporate funds to influence elections. Those five Justices substituted their own preferences for the judgment of Congress that had built on decades of legal development to pass bipartisan campaign finance reform legislation. In order to reach its divisive decision granting corporations, banks, and insurance companies new rights to the detriment of the voices of individual Americans, the Court overstepped the proper judicial role, and rejected not just the conclusions of the elected branches, but also its own recent precedent upholding the very law it chose to overturn. In one of his most powerful dissents, Justice Stevens noted that: ''[The] Court's ruling threatens to undermine the integrity of elected institutions across the nation. The path it has taken to reach its outcome will, I fear, do damage to this institution.'' He was right, again.

I share Justice Stevens' concern for the Court's reputation. Two of the three branches of government are involved in campaigns and elections. When the American people see the third branch reaching out to influence those elections—as they did most recently in Arizona—they rightly get suspicious of its impartiality. I hope that Elena Kagan will show the judgment and forthrightness of Justice Stevens and share our concern about the public's confidence in our judicial system. Based on her Oxford thesis almost 20 years ago, before she had even attended law school, I expect that she will. I hope that she will honor Justice Stevens' extraordinary legacy and that of the Justice for whom she clerked, Justice Thurgood Marshall, by so doing.

The country needs and deserves a Supreme Court that bases its decisions on the law and the Constitution, not politics or an ideological agenda. A recent pattern of Supreme Court decisions has emerged by a conservative, activist majority. These opinions have twisted both the Constitution and the law to favor big corporations over the interests of hard-working Americans.

The most recent example of this conservative activism came just last week in a case called Rent-a-Center v. Jackson when they distorted their own precedent the clear congressional intent in passing the Federal Arbitration Act, FAA. Congress did not intend the FAA to apply to employment cases and certainly did not intend involuntary and unconscionable provisions requiring binding mandatory arbitration to override civil rights protections against racial discrimination and retaliation, as was allowed in that case. The five Justices distorted the law to forbid almost all court challenges to arbitration. In doing so, the court stripped quintessential civil rights protections that Congress has passed over the last several decades for hundreds of thousands of Americans who work under mandatory arbitration agreements. It is artifice and activism to the detriment of hard-working Americans who deserve their day in court.

The law is not a game. The law is intended to serve the people—protecting the freedom of individuals from the tyranny of government or the mob, and helping to organize our society for the good of all. No Justice should substitute his or her personal preferences and overrule congressional efforts passed into law to protect hard-working Americans pursuant to our constitutional role. Judges must approach every case with an open mind and a commitment to fairness and the rule of law. I was encouraged to hear Solicitor General Kagan voice similar views in her eloquent opening statement today. I hope Americans took the opportunity to see and hear from the nominee herself. If they did, I suspect that they will be supportive.

Tomorrow each Senator on the Judiciary Committee, whether Republican and Democrat, will have 30 minutes to question her. I urge Senators to listen to Solicitor General Kagan's responses and to approach the hearing with the same openmindedness and impartiality that we expect from Supreme Court Justices.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS BARRY DANIEL SMITH

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, today I rise to express my deepest sympathies to the family of Army PFC Barry Daniel Smith, who died on May 7 while stationed at Fort Hood, TX. He enlisted in the Army in October of 2009 and completed basic training and Multiple Launch Rocket System training before joining the 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery, MLRS, 41st Fires Brigade. The American people will forever be grateful to Private First Class Smith for his willingness to serve.

A longtime New Hampshire resident, Barry was a graduate of Littleton High School and Hesser College in Manchester, where he earned a degree in criminal justice. He was a lover of the great outdoors, of hunting and camping with family and friends. With his friendly nature and wonderful laugh, Barry made friends easily and had many.

Private Smith exemplified the best in America's long tradition of service to this country. He was extremely proud to serve in the U.S. Army. Our Nation can never adequately thank Private Smith for his willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of the American people, nor can words diminish the pain of losing this young soldier. It is now up to us to honor his memory by supporting our veterans and their families and ensuring America's continued security.

Private Barry Smith is survived by his parents Dan and Shelly Smith of Auburn, ME, and Linda and Jonathan Larrivee of Littleton, NH. He is also survived by numerous siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. This young patriot will be dearly missed by all.

I ask my colleagues and all Americans to join me in honoring the life of Army PFC Barry Daniel Smith.

TAX EXTENDERS BILL

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I was surprised to see the Senate majority leader on Friday morning, in some of the harshest possible language, make the misleading assertion that Senate Republicans oppose the underlying policy in the tax extenders bill. His statement conveniently ignored the basic reason nearly every Republican for opposing the Democratic leadership's substitute. It was opposed to because it perpetuated the large deficit spending that has become the modus operandi of the Democratic leadership.

The way to a bipartisan agreement is to follow the path set 1 week ago