

for repeal. We made a promise to our constituents that we would vote to repeal this bill on their behalf and that is just what we intend to do.

The importance of a repeal vote becomes more evident every day. Americans view it as an important decision point—a marker that shows we are serious about a return to limited government. On that point, it should be clear where Republicans stand. Every one of us voted against the bill. Every one of us voted for repeal after that. And this week, every Republican reaffirmed his or her commitment to doing it again.

Democrats made a lot of promises about this bill. Virtually every one has proved to be empty. Republicans have made one promise: that we would work to repeal it and replace it with common-sense reforms that lower costs, protect job creation and that people actually want. It is a promise we will keep.

AFGHANISTAN VISIT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we have entered our tenth year of fighting in Afghanistan, and we can never express our gratitude enough to the heroic men and women of our Armed Forces who continue the battle there. Many of them—nearly one-fifth of all U.S. forces in that country—are from units based in Kentucky: Fort Campbell, Fort Knox, the Kentucky National Guard, the Marine Corps and the Reserves.

I recently led a Congressional delegation to the region and spent some time in Afghanistan to see up close the progress our forces are making there in clearing out the Taliban and creating the opportunity for Afghan security forces to assume greater responsibility. During my visit, I had the honor of meeting many of the servicemembers from Kentucky. I told them that we are proud of them, we support them, we thank them for their service, and we pray for their safe return.

Forces in Afghanistan from Kentucky units number more than 18,000 strong. They have seen much military success—but in the process, many have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

The 101st Airborne Division, based out of Fort Campbell and known as the Screaming Eagles, endured a particularly hard year, losing more than 100 soldiers since last March. In fact, nearly one out of five American lives lost in Afghanistan in the past year has been lost from the 101st. The men and women who stood beside them honor their sacrifice by continuing the fight.

After a long deployment, many of the soldiers from the 101st are due to return home over the next few months, just as their brothers-in-arms from Fort Knox are deploying. About 3,500 soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division and the 703rd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Detachment will arrive in Afghanistan in the next few weeks or are already

there. It is the biggest deployment from Fort Knox since World War II.

Hundreds of servicemembers from the Kentucky Air and Army National Guard are performing critical missions in Afghanistan as well. The 123rd Airlift Wing, the 2123rd Transportation Company, the 20th Special Forces Group and a Kentucky Guard Agricultural Development Team have all recently sent men and women to the fight, some who have served as many as six tours.

It was my honor to meet some of these brave warriors in person this month when I visited the headquarters of the 101st Airborne Division at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan and also during my stop at Camp Leatherneck in the southern part of that country, the outpost for a number of Kentucky Marines.

These extraordinary men and women leave their loved ones thousands of miles behind and put on their country's uniform every day, with their lives in the balance. They have seen their friends and fellow soldiers and Marines make the ultimate sacrifice, and yet they fight on to accomplish a difficult mission. And they continue to make their country, the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and this Senator very proud.

When we honor our servicemembers, we also honor their families, who endure the long months with a loved one gone and in harm's way. This country would not have the finest fighting force in the world without their sacrifice and support as well.

It is brave servicemembers like the ones I got to meet who keep this country free. When both the Senate and the House of Representatives met in joint session recently to hear the President deliver his State of the Union address, we did so under the cloak of freedom that these heroes provide. America is grateful for their service and their sacrifice.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Tennessee.

(The remarks of Mr. CORKER and Mrs. MCCASKILL pertaining to the introduction of S. 245 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, my remarks may take a little longer than 10 minutes, so I ask unanimous consent that I may deliver my remarks in full.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HATCH. Thank you, Mr. President.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, we have come a long way in 1 year.

On December 24, 2009—1 day before Christmas—this body passed a radical overhaul of our Nation's health care system. That is right. The majority passed ObamaCare on Christmas Eve.

It was not this body's finest moment. It was not the administration's finest moment. And I expect that this debate will go down in history for its persistent lack of attention to the considered views of ordinary Americans—Americans who rejected ObamaCare's giant new entitlement expansions and the job-killing taxes haphazardly cobbled together to pay for them.

It did not have to be this way. In the midst of the greatest fiscal collapse since the Great Depression, Americans wanted Democrats, who controlled all of the levers of power in Washington, to focus on job creation. Instead, like teenagers set loose when mom and dad leave town, they did what they wanted to, and focused on a government takeover of the Nation's health care system.

Surprising only the most ideologically driven, support for ObamaCare cratered during the townhall meetings of August 2009. The message was loud and clear. Our health care system, and in particular the government policies that contribute to unsustainable inflation in the health care sector, might be in need of reform. But the solution to our problems is not additional government regulation and control of health care delivery by Washington bureaucrats. And the solution is most definitely not to be found in the billions of dollars in new taxes, most of which will be passed through to American families in the form of higher premiums.

For those who did not deliberately put on blinders, the wishes of their constituents were obvious.

Stop the push for ObamaCare and move onto fixing the economy.

But the Senate did not listen.

Instead, prodded ahead by an administration that saw the great liberal dream of government-run health care slipping, the long march continued.

First, the Democratic majority cut short the Finance Committee's bipartisan negotiations.

Then, heads down, the majority plowed forward on the floor, allowing virtually no meaningful amendments.

And before going home for Christmas, it passed the most sweeping reform of the Nation's economy in over 70 years without a single Republican vote.

Every Democratic senator supported the bill.

Not one Republican did.

When ObamaCare passed the Senate, its proponents assumed it was on the