

months of this year. That is not how the Senate is supposed to work. That is a dictatorial dictate by the majority leader, unprecedented in 200 years or more of operation of this Senate.

So we are waiting for that decision, and, obviously, that decision will have a bearing on my position on this particular issue.

I would also comment on the fact that lately we have been hearing a lot from the President about income inequality, and I anticipate we will be hearing a lot more as we move toward the 2014 elections in November. There will be a debate on this, and I hope there will be a debate which allows both sides to look at this in a serious way and try to find ways to address the issue. But if we do that, I think it is important we understand that the President's signature accomplishment, the Affordable Care Act—ObamaCare, as it is called—is contributing to the problem of income inequality. So any debate on that issue, to be factually accurate and to be truthful, needs to incorporate a conversation about the impact of ObamaCare.

As recently as 2012, we were told by the President that the health insurance premiums paid by small businesses and individuals "will go down." Yet even as the administration recently has admitted that many Americans will pay more for health care because of ObamaCare, this week the latest report on health spending trends from CMS—the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid—disclosed that health care spending in the United States rose 3.7 percent in 2012. That is less than it rose in previous years, and that is a good sign.

Many are saying, well, the reason for this is the Affordable Care Act. Had we not passed the Affordable Care Act, this wouldn't have happened. Apparently, though, they did not read the rest of the report because the report also states that the provisions in the Affordable Care Act had minimal impact on total national health care spending. So while the administration may claim that their bill, ObamaCare, is lowering overall health care spending, the report says it has only had a minimal impact.

What is happening is that there are reforms being made through the private sector, through the providers, in terms of more efficient, more effective ways to deliver health care. That is not operating because of the health care act. In fact, the health care act, if we are truthful about it, is contributing to the problem of inequality.

Many Americans are experiencing, despite what the President has said, higher premiums or paying outrageous deductibles when they purchase coverage through the ObamaCare exchanges. Let's bring this down to a personal level because I have been receiving hundreds, actually thousands of emails, phone calls, letters, comments that I hear back home from Hoosiers who basically say: This ain't working. It is sure not working for me.

But I want to bring it down to the personal level so we can understand what individual families are going through at this particular time with this mandate imposed upon them relative to their health care coverage.

Thomas from Indianapolis wrote to me and said he went on the ObamaCare exchange to take a look at health insurance plans that would be available to him and he was, as he said, "shocked to find that it was at least \$200 a month." That is \$2,400 a year more than he had been quoted just a few months before from a broker. He added, "I have thought about just going without insurance"—as we know many individuals are thinking about and have decided not to sign up for this program. Of course, the program is built financially on the fact that millions will sign up and that is not happening. I predict that is going to break the back of the program. He added:

I have thought about going without insurance, but my family suggested that I not do that. The Affordable Care Act has created a terrible quandary for me. At this point I feel as if the Federal Government is like a mean Big Brother, making my life miserable.

William from Granger, IN, emailed me to tell me his wife, who works as a part-time nurse, now is no longer offered health care because she is part time. So William then decided, OK, I will have to go into the exchange and find insurance for my wife and my family and discovered that their premiums will rise to \$19,076 a year. He goes on to say, "So much for 'if you like your plan, if you like your doctor . . . your costs will go down by \$2,500.'"

Let me repeat that. The President has said your costs are going to go down by an average of \$2,500 a year. William's costs increased over \$7,500 a year. That is a \$10,500 swing. That is not what was promised.

Brandy from Cambridge City, IN, told me:

I have been offered insurance through work at a cost of \$318 or \$80 a week. I then checked HealthCare.Gov and have been given a quote of \$450 a month. I work a minimum wage job and work as many hours as I can to get by as it is. After taxes and child support, neither option is an option that I can afford.

He also cannot even afford to pay the penalty of the payment.

These are just a few of the hundreds, if not thousands, of Hoosier comments I have heard from people who are experiencing sticker shock when they search for so-called affordable care under ObamaCare. I don't know if these people are Republicans or Democrats, conservatives, moderates, liberals, nonvoters or voters. These are just human beings who live in my State, regardless of their political affiliation, who are basically saying this thing is killing us. All these examples, multiplied by hundreds if not thousands, are contributing to the inequality the President is talking about.

The inescapable truth is that the Democrats forced an unwanted, unpopular, and unread—the famous quote from then House Speaker NANCY

PELOSI—"We have to pass the bill so we can find out what is in it"—and we are finding out about what is in it—an unwanted, unpopular, and unread 2000-plus page, one-size-fits-all health care bill, dictated by one party without any support from the minority.

I am questioning whether this is the best way to deal with health care issues. Jamming this thing through on Christmas Eve day in 2009 has turned out to be a disastrous Christmas gift for the American people. Families across our country who are being forced to redirect money they would have used to pay rent, to help their children attend school, to put food on the table, to pay the electric bills, are finding many cannot even do that.

As we discuss the issue of income inequality, and it appears the President is going to want to do that throughout this coming election year, let's not pretend that ObamaCare is helping the situation. It is not. We need to face up to the fact that the Affordable Care Act—I bet the writers of this bill, if they could do it over again, wish they had not used the word "affordable." They could call it the health care act or health care act for American people or whatever. If they went back and rewrote it, I bet you they would drop the word "affordable," based on the facts, not the perception, the fact of what this health care bill is.

I suspect they would have wanted to pass this in a bipartisan way so that at this point in time they would not have to take full responsibility for this act. Too many hard-working American families are paying more, not less, for health care because of ObamaCare, and it is contributing to the inequality the President continues to talk about.

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

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

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, over the last few days our friends across the aisle have been telling the American people that we have a choice when it comes to the extension of long-term unemployment benefits. On one hand, they are saying we can do exactly what the President, Senator REID, and his allies want, which is to extend benefits for 3 months at a cost of \$6.5 billion that we will have to borrow from somebody or we will do nothing at all.

Well, I am here to suggest that is a false choice, as President Obama likes to say from time to time. We can do better than that. As a matter of fact, several of my Republican colleagues have offered their suggestions. I have in my hand a list of 23 amendments that would deal with everything from improving access to workforce training to finding a way to pay for this money that would otherwise have to be borrowed from the Chinese or other creditors of the United States and added to our \$17.3 trillion debt.

In other words, there are a lot of good ideas. We just have not been given the opportunity to debate them and offer these amendments and actually do what the Senate used to do. As the Republican leader said yesterday, we actually used to have committees that voted on amendments and then passed bills that came to the floor. We used to actually have an open amendment process where people could offer their amendments, and then we would debate them and vote on them. What a novel idea. That, of course, is called legislating. That is what the legislative branch—Congress—is supposed to be doing. That is not what we have been doing.

The majority leader is basically the traffic cop for the Senate floor. He is the one who determines whether we have an opportunity to have this sort of fulsome debate so we can offer these constructive, bipartisan—in many instances—ideas.

We would like to try to reform our unemployment compensation system in order to help grow the economy, help the private sector create jobs, and get more people back to work so they don't have to depend on extended unemployment insurance. However, if they do find themselves in a difficult circumstance, as many Americans unfortunately do, they can then go back to school by the using Pell grant, for example, to go to our community colleges, which do a fantastic job of helping people learn new skills that make them a good fit for the good jobs, of which there are many. Unfortunately, there are not enough skilled workers in the workforce who are qualified for those jobs.

To give the Senate a flavor for some of the ideas, my colleague from Oklahoma, Senator COBURN, who is always full of a lot of ideas, filed an amendment to ensure that people don't claim unemployment insurance and Social Security disability benefits simultaneously. If there is a case of double dipping, that would seem to be it, and it is an abuse of the system. He has filed an amendment that would prevent millionaires and billionaires from receiving unemployment checks. I know it is hard to believe, but people with incomes of \$1 million or more have claimed nearly \$21 million worth of unemployment benefits in a single year. That is unbelievable. What an abuse. That is an insult, really, to people who are in dire straits and need help, to know there are people gaming the system either by double dipping or being millionaires and claiming unemployment benefits. Again, we have borrowed \$250 billion to pay these extended unemployment benefits since 2008, and there are some millionaires and billionaires who are gaming the system for their benefit. Why wouldn't we want to fix that? Why wouldn't we want to have a vote on those good ideas by our colleague Senator COBURN?

Meanwhile, our colleague from South Carolina, Senator SCOTT, has filed a

commonsense amendment that would define full-time employment as a 40-hour workweek for the purposes of ObamaCare. The Presiding Officer—and since he walked in, I will pick on my friend from Maryland—remembers when we had a number of leaders from organized labor who came to the White House and said that ObamaCare is turning full-time work into part-time work. Because of the penalties associated with the employer mandate and the like, many employers are shifting full-time workers into part-time workers. That is not just a concern on this side of the aisle; it is a broad concern which impacts a lot of people.

I remember recently being in Tyler, TX, at a diner, and the owner of that diner said he tragically had to put a single mom on a 30-hour workweek in order to avoid some of the penalties of ObamaCare. So to make up for that lost income, she had to go and get a second part-time job because of ObamaCare and its unintended consequences. So Senator SCOTT has an amendment that would address that problem.

I hope the majority leader will rethink his longstanding position—at least over the last 6 months—of basically shutting out any other constructive ideas not just on this side of the aisle but on the other side of the aisle as well, as the Republican leader pointed out yesterday.

In addition, our colleague from Indiana, Senator COATS, has several ideas. One would offset the extension of long-term unemployment benefits by delaying the individual and employer mandates under ObamaCare until 2015. We all recall that the President and this administration on its own initiative—I am looking hard to find where they have the authority, but nevertheless they did—delayed the employer mandate for a year on their own. Well, this would take the money saved from delaying the individual employer mandate and use that to pay for the extension of unemployment benefits.

Another amendment would offset the cost of this extension by requiring people to provide a Social Security number before they claim the child tax credit. All it would do is make them provide a Social Security number to make sure that we root out fraud and abuse in the child tax credit claims. It would save billions of dollars, and it would allow us to pay for this short-term extension of long-term unemployment benefits.

I would also add that I think most people need to be reminded that actually the basic program of unemployment insurance covers people for up to half a year, but over the last 5 years Congress has extended that up to 99 weeks, which is about 2 years. Well, this is supposed to be an emergency program, and thankfully the economy is starting to show some signs of improvement and growth. So what we need to do is get off of this temporary emergency measure and get back to

normal circumstances and try to find ways to pay our bills and make sure people don't abuse the American taxpayer by gaming the system. We need to continue to look for ways to help people learn the skills they need in order to get the good, high-paying jobs that exist, among other things.

Well, here is another idea. Our colleague from New Hampshire, Senator AYOTTE, has filed an amendment that would restore the military pension benefits. This is something, if you will remember, that was taken out of the Murray-Ryan budget deal that passed before we left for Christmas, and I think it is fair to say there is broad bipartisan support for restoring those cuts to the military pensions, and Senator AYOTTE's amendment would do that.

All of these amendments deserve debate, which I am trying in some small way to provide here, but others have their ideas and have their way of talking about it, and they also deserve a vote. But, again, the majority leader, Senator REID, is the traffic cop on the Senate floor. As Senator MCCONNELL pointed out yesterday, the Senate has been dramatically transformed from a place where the Senate was justifiably claimed as the greatest deliberative body on the planet but no more.

We can return to the way the Senate used to be by having this sort of constructive, bipartisan, fulsome discussion and vote on good ideas and make legislation better and not settle for something less. I said—and it is true—that Senators have a right to debate and offer legislation. I am not sure many people across America have thought very deeply about what that means.

This isn't about the Presiding Officer's rights as a Senator or my rights as a Senator. This is about the rights and the voices of the 26 million people I represent, because when I am shut out of the process—when I can't offer amendments and ideas about how to improve legislation—they are shut out as well, and that is wrong.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

MR. CORNYN. Mr. President, I was unaware there was a time limit. I ask unanimous consent for an additional 5 minutes.

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

MR. CORNYN. I thank the Chair.

So these amendments represent just a small sample of the ideas our side of the aisle has put forward to help the long-term unemployed, accelerate job creation, and grow the economy—something I know we all want. We all want it, so why not talk about it. Why not vote on these ideas. Why not get the Senate back into the position where we have the give and take of ideas and where we come up with the best for the American people.

A few other amendments my colleagues from Ohio and Kansas, Senator PORTMAN and Senator ROBERTS, have

offered would increase accountability and much stronger safeguards in the U.S. regulatory system. Regulations are what the bureaucracy does. We can't vote for them or against them. We can't hold them accountable that way, and they are out of control. If someone wants to know why those bills are so important, it is because last year the Obama administration imposed \$112 billion worth of new regulations on the U.S. economy—\$112 billion worth of new regulations in 2013 alone.

Our colleague from Alaska, Senator MURKOWSKI, who is the ranking member of the energy committee, is rightly concerned about the impact of misguided regulations on our energy industry—primarily the oil and gas industry—and she has taken the time to draft a bold plan for reforming U.S. energy policy that would promote economic growth, job creation, national security, and responsible stewardship of our environment.

In conclusion, I wish to recognize—in terms of a summary of some of the ideas, 23 of which I have on this card, but I will just mention a few of them—the ideas of our colleague from Utah, Senator MIKE LEE, and his efforts to reform our dysfunctional tax system in a way that supports middle class families who are working hard to provide for their children. We should agree, as Senator LEE has advocated, that tax reform should aim not just to simplify the Tax Code and fuel job growth, but also to ease the burden on hard-working, middle-class families.

There are a lot of great ideas out there. I can't think of a better time to talk about them than this time, when the President of the United States has made a priority of income inequality which, unfortunately, has become worse under his administration, not better. This has been further exacerbated by burdens such as ObamaCare, which we find out is just a bundle of broken promises, including: "If you like what you have, you can keep it." "It will lower costs, not increase them." We are finding out none of that is true.

There are a lot of great ideas that we could, working together in the interests of the American people, agree on that would actually improve their economic situation and help restore the American dream. But what is the American dream to somebody who has been out of work and can't find work? It is a disappointment to say the least. We need to help people to not maintain their dependency on a government benefit in perpetuity but to liberate them from that dependency, to help them regain their self respect and sense of dignity by finding work and providing for themselves and their families, and to live their version of the American dream. In the process we all benefit. The Federal Government can pay its bills because people are paying taxes because they have good jobs, and America will be the same America we inherited from our parents and grand-

parents and, hopefully, we will make it better for the next generation and beyond.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

SOUTH SUDAN

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I have taken the floor of the Senate—and when I was a Member of the House, the floor of the House—to talk about circumstances that are occurring somewhere in the world where people are being killed, displaced; people are being uprooted simply because of their ethnicity. Ethnic cleansing has occurred around the world. I have taken the opportunity to put a spotlight on it in an effort to say that the civilized world needs to bring an end to those types of crimes against humanity. I have used the opportunity as a member of the Helsinki Commission, and now as chairman of the Helsinki Commission, to point out what America's priority needs to be, and that is to be a leader in the world to prevent ethnic cleansing.

Many of us believed, after World War II, that the world would never again allow circumstances wherein people were killed simply because of the ethnic community to which they belong. I have spoken about Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, and Syria, and now we see the same thing happening again in South Sudan.

I just came from a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that was convened to discuss the crisis in South Sudan with two witnesses: the Honorable Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of African Affairs, and the Honorable Nancy E. Lindborg, Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance. These two witnesses were giving an update to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as to the circumstances in South Sudan and what we can do to try to bring about a resolution.

I rise today to discuss the deteriorating circumstances in South Sudan. As some of my colleagues may know, ongoing political tensions between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and forces loyal to the former Vice President Riek Machar, coupled with pre-existing ethnic tensions, erupted in violence the night of December 15. I join the President and Secretary Kerry in calling for an immediate end to the violence in South Sudan. Currently, it is estimated that nearly 200,000 people have been internally displaced as a result of the conflict, with another 32,000 having fled to neighboring States. The U.N. estimates that thousands of Sudanese people have been killed since December 15. Let me just remind my colleagues that three years ago today the people of South Sudan started a voting process that later that year led to their independence as the youngest new country in the world.

Our U.S. Ambassador, Susan Page, has remained in Juba, along with a security detail and minimum key personnel. I thank her; it is very courageous of her to remain in South Sudan so we have our leadership on the ground to try to help the people. I applaud her bravery and sacrifice and those who are with her.

The worsening violence has spurred a humanitarian crisis. The President has nominated Ambassador Booth to be our ambassador to that region to try to get a peace process started. He is currently in Ethiopia trying to get the international community to respond to a political solution to South Sudan. The international community has responded rapidly, including by working to significantly expand the size of the U.N. mission in South Sudan, but since the evacuation of foreign aid workers, most humanitarian agencies and the international NGOs are heavily reliant on brave South Sudanese staff who put their lives at risk to help their people.

These are large numbers for the country of Sudan—the number of people displaced and the number of people killed. Let me share with my colleagues one of many examples of the crisis and how it has affected people in that region.

I recently learned that at the onset of the December clashes, one local staff person from an American NGO was rounded up, along with seven members of his family, and taken to a police station in Juba. He ultimately escaped to the U.N. compound, but his family was killed, along with more than 200 others. He is from the Nuer ethnic group, which now lives in fear of ethnic targeting by members of the country's security forces from another ethnic group, the Dinka. Media reports also suggest that individuals in uniforms have entered the U.N. bases in several locations and forcibly removed civilians taking shelter there. On December 21, two U.N. peacekeepers were killed after a group attacked a U.N. peacekeeping base that was sheltering 20 civilians.

There is no safe harbor today in South Sudan. The U.N.'s base can be overrun, and people killed because of their ethnicity. The international community must respond.

I remain extremely concerned at the reports out of South Sudan, all of which suggest serious crimes against humanity are occurring in the country. The world cannot stand by and bear witness to another ethnic cleansing as we have seen in so many other places around the world. We must do all we can to ensure a peaceful resolution of the crisis and accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity in South Sudan.

Our first priority is to get peace on the ground, to stop the killings, so people can live in peace. We need to work with the international community so humanitarian aid can get to the people who need it—and that is very challenging considering that international