

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today has been an eventful day on the unemployment compensation front. We began the day working with Republican colleagues to put together what we thought was an amendment they would join us in pushing forward. But surprisingly and disappointingly to me, those whom we worked with were unable to join on the amendment.

I am disappointed for a number of reasons, not the least of which is we gave the Republicans what they wanted. It is entirely paid for. The amendment made structural reforms in the unemployment compensation bill, which is something they said they wanted. The amendment includes a proposal, much like that advocated by Senator PORTMAN, that would prevent people from collecting both unemployment insurance and disability insurance at the same time.

Our amendment includes an offset that is PAUL RYAN's offset. It was the same thing we used in the Murray-Ryan budget agreement this body supported a few weeks ago.

So it is totally paid for with something PAUL RYAN suggested and we adopted a short period of time ago. It makes structural reforms they said they wanted—maybe not all of them, but it made structural reforms. It is hard to understand why they cannot take yes for an answer. Maybe it is because they do not want the legislation passed. It is possible.

But I have not given up. I have discussions with a number of Republican colleagues this evening. They said they are going to try to come up with something else. I certainly hope that is the case. We need to understand that there are 1.4 million Americans hurting. It is hard for me to comprehend why something that meets the outlines of what we understood they wanted is not good enough.

Maybe they do not like it because it does not give them an opportunity to—I withdraw that. I think we have had enough talk here today. I am not going to add to that. All I wish to close the Senate with tonight is it is very unfortunate for a lot of people who are truly hurting.

It is paid for with something that is certainly standard around here. We won't be able to use that anymore. States won't be able to use the same money anymore, but it doesn't affect the budget in any way. It doesn't raise the deficit one penny. It sounds as if it is a very good deal to help 1.4 million people.

Explain to somebody who is on long-term unemployment in the State of Colorado, State of Illinois, State of anyplace, and they will say they didn't vote for this because they didn't get to offer unlimited amendments, even though there was a proposal that wouldn't run up the deficit one penny. It was all paid for. It is hard for me to comprehend that. We could explain it to someone, but it is their job to explain it, not mine. My explanation is that it is something the American people want, need, and should have.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### VERMONT ARMY NATIONAL GUARD AWARD

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as the U.S. mission in Afghanistan winds down this year, one thing can be said with certainty: The dedication and service our men and women in uniform is unparalleled. It will truly be with the thanks of a grateful nation that our troops will finally withdraw from Afghanistan by year's end.

This weekend, that appreciation will be front and center in Vermont, when the 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment, Mountain, will receive the Valorous Unit Award for extraordinary heroism in action, against an armed enemy of the United States, during their 2010 deployment to Afghanistan. The Mountain Battalion, as they are known, led Task Force Avalanche in Paktia, a province in western Afghanistan, and they were responsible for security in an area the size of Delaware so that aid and development efforts could go forward.

In the best tradition of the ever ready Green Mountain Boys, the Mountain Battalion knows a thing or two about operating in mountainous terrain. They are the only unit in the U.S. Army specifically designed to neutralize the enemy in a mountainous terrain—expertise that proved invaluable as they supported seven forward operating bases and combat outposts spread throughout the mountains of Paktia. Upon their arrival in 2010, in advance of the parliamentary elections, they found many unsecure roads and zones. The men and women of the Mountain Battalion helped to neutralize supply lines and occupied formerly safe zones to provide a level of security during the election that increased voter turnout in those districts by 15 percent. In large part because of their efforts, Paktia province held the distinction of being the only province that cycle with zero civilian casualties during the election.

Throughout their deployment, the men and women of Task Force Ava-

lanche formed close partnerships with their counterparts in the Afghan National Security Force, living and operating together. They credit success in increasing proficiency and dedication of these forces in Paktia to the close relationship they forged. When the area of operations was hit hard by flooding, it was the Mountain Battalion and their Afghan partners who were there to respond for the civilians facing devastation. They even dispatched a platoon across the border to Pakistan to help flood victims—a border more often in the news for the crossing of foreign fighters and the Haqqani Network. The Task Force trained more than 50 Afghan National Army medics, who in turn provided care to U.S. personnel as well. These medics are just one part of the lasting contribution left by the Mountain Battalion in Paktia.

Also remaining in Afghanistan as a testament to their valor are 2 schools, 4 mosques, a community center, and 22 other projects. The Mountain Battalion is estimated to have contributed \$700,000 into the local economy in money and jobs, and it is further estimated that almost 30,000 Afghans were beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance alone after the floods. Despite having been one of the most chaotic provinces in Afghanistan, our Green Mountain Boys left Paktia a better place for the people who live there, and they did so in partnership with the people who live there.

Through 5 months in Paktia, these men and women led 4,300 combat patrols, 9 air assault operations, and 65 named operations. A total of 600 individuals were awarded combat badges, 26 individuals were awarded the Purple Heart, and, tragically, 2 of these brave soldiers sacrificed their lives. Those who returned home brought with them the wisdom and experience of their deployment. As a Vermonter, I could not be more proud of these men and women. They and the mission they so ably performed help define what valor means.

Importantly, this incredible unit is a National Guard unit. Made up of citizen soldiers from Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire, the men and women of the 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment, Mountain returned from their distinguished service and went back to their jobs and their neighborhoods throughout Vermont and New England. This story was duplicated repeatedly in Afghanistan and also in Iraq. Because of soldiers like these, today's National Guard is a ready and reliable component of America's fighting force, indistinguishable on the battlefield from their Active Duty counterparts, and trusted with essential missions.

I congratulate the Mountain Battalion of the Vermont National Guard on the Valorous Unit Award. You make us proud. You have given us and you have renewed and built upon an incredible legacy.