

six decades later, that America still deeply respects and honors their service and sacrifice.

My father served in World War II. I have had the pleasure of meeting many of his contemporaries when they came to Washington to make this important trip. Hundreds of Kentucky veterans have completed this journey, thanks to Brian and subsequent leaders of Bluegrass Honor Flight.

That is just one way Brian has worked to see that America stands up for its veterans, just as they have so bravely stood up for their country. It is one reason why I know he will make an excellent commander in chief for the VFW.

Brian served in the U.S. Air Force as a jet engine mechanic on F-4 Phantom fighter aircraft before becoming a flight engineer aboard a C-141 Starlifter transport aircraft. He has deployed to Grenada and Panama as well as on Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Brian and his wife Jean, who has also served in leadership posts for the VFW, live in Louisville and have two children, Tara and Andrew. I am sure his family is proud of Brian, along with many Kentucky veterans, particularly his fellow VFW members at Post 1170.

Let me also congratulate my good friend Carl Kaelin, whom I have also worked with for decades on behalf of Bluegrass State veterans, for his appointment to serve as chief of staff to the commander in chief. Carl and Brian will make quite a team. Kentucky and the Nation are grateful for their leadership and for their service.

Brian has previously served the VFW as its junior vice commander in chief. He also served as the senior vice commander in chief. I know Brian is a huge hockey fan. So he will know what I mean when I say that his election as commander in chief makes quite a hat trick—to the benefit of Kentucky veterans and veterans across America.

In Brian's own words, the VFW is "an organization of doers" and "an organization comprised of patriots." Both of these descriptions aptly fit the VFW's new chief. Under Brian's leadership, I am sure the VFW will continue to pay it forward to every veteran who has raised his or her right hand and taken an oath to defend a nation dedicated to the preservation of life and liberty.

OBAMACARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, President Obama said something interesting just days before signing his namesake health takeover into law. In explaining the need for ObamaCare, here is what he said:

[W]hat's happening to your premiums? What's happening to your co-payments? What's happening to your deductible? They're all going up. That's money straight out of your pocket.

So, the bottom line is this: The status quo on health care is simply unsustainable.

"Simply unsustainable" was the President's view on the state of our

health care system before ObamaCare. Here is his view on the health care system 6 years later: "Too many Americans still strain to pay for their physician visits and prescriptions, cover their deductibles, or pay their monthly insurance bills; struggle to navigate a complex, sometimes bewildering system; and remain uninsured."

That is the President on the state of America's health care law 6 years after ObamaCare. The President wrote this just last month. It sounds an awful lot like what we heard from him years ago, in the pre-ObamaCare world. It throws the reality of this partisan law into stark relief. It is not only that ObamaCare is failing to live up to the many promises invoked to sell it, but it is often making things worse.

Just pick up any paper or turn on the news, and you will see that more troubling projections are rolling in when it comes to ObamaCare. In fact, each day seems to bring more forecasts of skyrocketing premiums and dwindling choices. It is a trend hitting Americans across the country.

For instance, here is the headline people in my home State recently awoke to: "Get ready to pay more for health insurance in Kentucky." The story goes on to warn of ObamaCare premium rates that could skyrocket by as high as 47 percent. Nearly 160,000 people are expected to be impacted.

Here is a letter from a man from Louisville who recently contacted my office. "How," he asks, "are working class Americans, like myself, able to budget for such drastic changes?" "The so-called Affordable Care Act," he said, "is unaffordable."

He and other Kentuckians are hardly alone in feeling this way. Take Illinois, where premiums could soar by as much as 55 percent; or Tennessee and Montana, where some rates could skyrocket by more than 60 percent; or Minnesota, where premiums could rise by an average of more than 50 percent. Minnesota's Democratic Governor said he was "alarmed" by these "drastic increases" and called them "reason for very serious concerns."

Even my friend, the Democratic leader, referred to ObamaCare's premium increases yesterday as "huge." He is right. He was right to mention ObamaCare's "tax increases" too. This partisan law raised taxes that hit the middle class after Democrats promised that it wouldn't.

So these huge premium increases aren't the only reason ObamaCare is raising costs for the middle class. Premiums aren't the only reason that Americans recently cited health costs as their No. 1 financial concern. It isn't hard to see why Americans might be hurting. Taxes are up, copays are up, and deductibles are outpacing wages. Now, with more and more insurance companies pulling out of the ObamaCare State exchanges, Americans are being left with another big problem—fewer coverage options.

The Obama administration used to promise us that the ObamaCare mar-

ketplace would "provide more choice and control over health insurance options" and result in "a significant increase in competition and an array of options for consumers everywhere." That was the promise of ObamaCare.

But that is not the reality for many Americans today. ObamaCare has forced out so many insurers that about one in five ObamaCare customers will be forced to find a new insurance company this fall. More than half of the country could have two or fewer insurers to choose from in the exchanges next year, and about one-third of all counties in the United States, along with seven entire States, are set to have just a single insurer offering plans in their areas. That includes one county in Arizona that, until just last night, would have had no options in the exchange at all. I know this is something that Senator MCCAIN has been deeply concerned about, and he has introduced good legislation to address it.

ObamaCare co-ops continue to collapse at every turn, too, with less than one-third expected to offer plans next year. When these co-ops collapse, they can cost taxpayers millions and disrupt coverage for thousands of enrollees. They can force patients to start over on their deductibles midyear and even to find new doctors. These are the latest reverberating echoes of the President's most famous broken promise: "If you like your health care plan, you can keep it." That was the President's promise.

Here is a Kentuckian from Campbellsburg, who wrote to me after losing his insurance:

I lost my health insurance that I had for many years because of ObamaCare. Instead of something affordable, I face the possibility of struggling to purchase an Obama health plan that costs two to three times what I had been paying.

To top it off, he said, the "process of trying to find coverage has been a nightmare."

Here is something to keep in mind when Democrats try to spin the American people on ObamaCare. For all of this chaos and pain for middle-class families, ObamaCare still has not achieved its stated purpose of universal coverage—not even close. Tens of millions still remain uninsured—tens of millions. And those who do have insurance are now discovering that simply having health insurance isn't the same thing as having health coverage. They have insurance, but it isn't the same thing as having health coverage.

Take one New Jersey man who has suffered for years from chronic migraines and needs medication to help alleviate the pain. The moment ObamaCare placed him on Medicaid, he lost his access to each of his doctors, which meant waiting 4 months to see a new doctor and get a prescription for the medication he needs. He said:

You have a card saying you have health insurance, but if no doctors take it, it's almost like having one of those fake IDs. Your medication is all paid for, but if you can't get the pills, it's worthless.

According to a Gallup poll released just this morning, many more Americans report that ObamaCare has hurt rather than helped their families—and many more Americans say that ObamaCare will make their family's health situation worse rather than better over the long run.

Is it any wonder? Americans were told that ObamaCare would allow them to keep the health plans they liked. They couldn't. Americans were told that ObamaCare would drive down health care premiums by \$2,500 per family. It hasn't. Americans were told that ObamaCare would not raise taxes on the middle class. It did. Americans were told that ObamaCare would increase choice and competition. The very opposite is proving true.

And remember the promise that "if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor"? It has been broken too. In fact, the Obama administration recently erased references to "keeping your doctor" from its Web site. These entirely predictable consequences are not just flukes or quirks of ObamaCare. They are not just small wrinkles in the system that will work themselves out with time. They represent fundamental flaws built into the law's original design.

Republicans warned about ObamaCare's consequences repeatedly from the very start. Democrats mocked us for doing so and rammed through their partisan law anyway. Every single Democrat in the Senate was needed to pass it, and they got every one of them.

I invite Democrats to now consider following the lead of one of the President's own former health care advisers who recently penned an op-ed titled "How I was wrong about ObamaCare." The problems Democrats caused for the middle class aren't going away until ObamaCare does. So if Democrats are serious about helping the middle class, they will work with us to build a bridge beyond ObamaCare to better care. Anything else is just more hollow rhetoric.

Today, 6 years on, ObamaCare is failing the middle class, but the President still hasn't offered a serious solution to fix it. He is now trying to convince Americans that the solution to his bloated, unwieldy, and expensive law is to make it more bloated, more unwieldy, and more expensive. In other words, it is more of the same—more of the same, just worse. His preferred Presidential candidate says the same thing. So do congressional Democrats.

How can anyone conclude, after reading all these stories about how ObamaCare is hurting the middle class, that what we need now is more ObamaCare in the form of a government-run plan? That is their solution now—more ObamaCare in the form of a government-run plan.

Look, Democrats can continue to spin us on how great this law is. They can continue to tell Americans to "get over" this law and its pain for the mid-

dle class. They can continue to laugh at Americans who lose their plans. They can continue to crow about exploiting "the stupidity of the American voter" to push this partisan law on the middle class. Or they can work with us to move beyond the failed experiment of ObamaCare. They can prove that they are finally willing to put people before ideology.

This much is clear: ObamaCare is a direct attack on the middle class. It hurts the very people it was designed to help. It raises costs, crushes choice, and is now crashing down around us. It simply isn't working.

To quote what President Obama said 6 years ago, "The bottom line is this: The status quo of health care is simply unsustainable."

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING SEPTEMBER 11

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it seems it was just a few minutes ago, but it wasn't; it was 15 years ago that, just a few feet from where I stand now, I went to a meeting. It was approaching 9 o'clock, and no one was in the room, S-211. Senator Breaux from Louisiana walked in, and he said: Flip on the TV. And we did. We could see the tower had been hit in New York. We thought a plane had hit it by mistake. So we shut off the TV and Senator Daschle came in and started the meeting. In just a few minutes, some people came in and ushered Senator Daschle out of the meeting. He came back in quickly and said: The building has to be evacuated; there is a plane headed toward the Capitol. As we walked out of the room and looked out the window, we could all see the smoke billowing from the place we learned was the Pentagon. I will always remember that. Of course I will. And, of course, we have learned since of the many heroes of that day—people running not away from danger but toward danger.

On that day, I was first taken home. I had to rush back to the Capitol, through police barricades. Four Members of the leadership were helicoptered out of the Capitol to a secure location outside of DC. As the sun was going down, we came back to the Capitol steps. BARBARA MIKULSKI, the Senator from Maryland, who is known for giving dynamic speeches, didn't give a speech that day. In front of this bipartisan group of Senators, she very simply said: I think what we should sing is "God Bless America." We all did that. It was a beautiful rendition of all the varied voices of Senators, Republicans and Democrats, singing that song. We didn't know what that meant—what tomorrow would bring—but that gave us some inspiration to think about how great our country is.

The perpetrators sought to attack our democracy, our way of life, but

they failed. The tragedy of that day reminded every American of our collective strength and resilience, led by George Bush who did such a remarkable job of rallying the Nation.

We exhibited the best of ourselves in front of the world, and we resolved to degrade and destroy the terrorists responsible. After many failed attempts and in spite of some people saying "Let's wait," President Obama said "Let's do this." And they killed Bin Laden. That was the right thing to do. It was a courageous move on behalf of President Obama but the right thing to do. He was ultimately brought to justice.

Today, 15 years later—I will always remember that experience a few feet from here, but we will all remember, in our own way, September 11, and in our own way honor the victims and the heroes of that day and never forget. We are always stronger together when we are united.

OBAMACARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have trouble comprehending my friend the Republican leader—how he can, with a straight face, talk about how terrible America is today. Things are upside down; it is terrible.

Remember, Obama was elected President almost 8 years ago. That month, under the prior administration, for lots of reasons we have all talked about, our country lost 800,000 jobs in one month. That wasn't the only month. Our unemployment rate shot up in places like the Presiding Officer's and my State to more than 14 percent. Unemployment in America was raging. Major companies failed. I saw the Secretary of Treasury on his knees in the White House begging the Speaker of the House, NANCY PELOSI, for help.

We joined together with President Bush. There was nothing partisan about what we did. Even though there were some small steps, we did our best to help the country. Since then, under the last 8 years of President Obama's leadership, the country has been significantly turned in the right direction.

For my friend the Republican leader to parrot what Donald Trump is saying: "Make America great again"—America is great right now. Unemployment is less than 5 percent. Millions of jobs have been created in this administration—millions and millions of jobs—about 16 million.

We have no ground troops, except in Afghanistan. They have been brought home, and rightfully so. To hear my friend the Republican leader talk about the awfulness of ObamaCare—you don't have to have a long memory to know what it was like before ObamaCare. Insurance companies were canceling policies, denying insurance, not writing insurance because you are a woman, because you had a prior disability. I don't know if my friend is briefed by his office, reads the newspapers, or watches