

CONDOLENCES TO WASHINGTON METRO CRASH VICTIMS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before we turn to legislative matters, I wish to express my personal condolences and those of the Senate to the people affected by yesterday's tragedy, and that was a lot of people. That tragedy took place on the Washington Metro system. Nine people were killed and scores more injured yesterday evening as they simply made their way home during rush hour. The accident has shaken this city and this body. Like so many other commuters, many who work on Capitol Hill rely on the Metro system every day. It has been reliable, and it has been safe. My heart goes out to the families who lost loved ones and those who were injured. As we learn more about what caused this terrible accident, we will work to ensure it never happens again.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this new year began with so much hope. When we began the 111th Congress, I had hoped Republicans would leave their Republican games in the 110th Congress. I had hoped they would have listened when the American people reviewed their record and said no to the party of no.

I wrote the following at the time, this past January:

We have no choice but to govern differently. The times demand it. If we do not govern differently, we will have taken no good lessons from the bad experience of the Bush years.

That goes for Republicans and Democrats alike.

In my first address to this Chamber this year, I reminded both Republicans and Democrats that when we retreat to partisanship, when we fail to reach for common ground, we rob ourselves of the ability to create the change the American people demanded.

As the health care debate approached in April, I reached out to our Republican colleagues and wrote this:

Rather than just saying no, you must be willing to offer concrete and constructive proposals. We cannot afford more of the obstructionist tactics that have denied or delayed Congress' efforts to address so many of the critical challenges facing this nation.

Last week, I reminded the other side that our hands remain outstretched across the aisle. I assured them we still save them a seat at the negotiating table. And just yesterday, I encouraged our Republican friends to join with us to pass an important bill that would promote foreign travel to the United States—creating jobs, reducing our deficit, and strengthening our economy in the process. Everyplace in America, there are hotel rooms and motel rooms that are not occupied as they should be. The legislation killed yesterday by the Republicans would have had more people coming to those hotel and motel rooms.

At the beginning of this year, at the beginning of this Congress, at the be-

ginning of this debate, and even up to the beginning of this week, my commitment to bipartisanship and finding common ground has not changed one bit. Unfortunately, a stubborn group of Senate Republicans has not changed either.

Yesterday, Republicans blocked a bill that had 11 Republican cosponsors. I assumed when they sponsored that bill they were in favor of the bill. That is kind of an idea people get around here. They blocked a bill that would support a trillion-dollar industry in an otherwise slow economy. They blocked a bill that would create 40,000 new jobs right here at home over the next year. It would have cut our deficit by \$425 million and helped our economy recover.

Perhaps, though, we shouldn't be surprised. Just last week, a Republican Senator said the following:

Democrats need to know when they bring [bills] up, we're going to extend the debate as long as we can—even if we can't win.

That is what he said.

Given their commitment to obstruction, it is remarkable we have gotten anything done this year, let alone such a strong catalog of important accomplishments that have helped us revive our economy, strengthen our national security, protect our environment, demand accountability, promote equality, and ensure progress. But if Republicans are going to stand in the way of a bill that creates tens of thousands of new jobs, cuts our deficit by hundreds of millions of dollars, and helps every single State in the Union, how are we going to do the other important work the American people sent us here to do? What is it they want to do?

As my good friend from North Dakota, Senator DORGAN, said yesterday on the floor:

If we can't agree on a piece of legislation that was offered by over 50 Senators, Republicans and Democrats, dealing with promotion of tourism and creating jobs and promoting this country's economic interests by asking international tourists to come to America and see what America is all about—if we can't agree on that, how on Earth will we get agreements on energy, health care, climate change, and so on? It is so disappointing.

I don't know if anyone could put it any better than Senator DORGAN did. I couldn't.

Reforming health care and pursuing energy independence are daunting tasks. No one claims it is simple, but nearly everyone knows it is essential. No one claims the answer is obvious, but everyone knows we must work toward one. Yet, if Republicans refuse to find common ground on the easy things, how will we do so on the hard ones?

It is difficult to understand, but it is clear to anyone following this debate that our Republican friends are not interested in making the difficult but necessary decisions to dig our economy out of this ditch and move us further down the path of recovering prosperity. They have said publicly and privately they are waiting on President Obama's

failure. At this point, it has been a bad bet because President Obama is still—today in the press, his popularity is approaching 70 percent.

Instead, they like to echo talking points written by pollsters. They like to repeat the tired, trite, and baseless claim that if we reform health care—85 percent of Americans want us to reform health care, but they are saying that if we improve health care, they will be denied and delayed in getting health care. It is absolutely incomprehensible what their reasoning is. Nothing could be further from the truth.

First, let me state once again the facts. No matter what Republicans claim, the government has no intention of choosing any part of your medical plan. Remember, we are talking a public option, a public choice. The government has no intention of choosing for you any part of your medical plan or meddling in any of your medical relationships. If you like the coverage you have, you can keep it. In fact, it is the name of a whole section of the HELP Committee's bill. Section 131 is called "No Changes to Existing Coverage." That is what the title of the bill section is. Every time you hear Republicans say otherwise, you know they are not interested in an honest debate.

Second, let me reiterate once again the reality. The only thing being delayed is urgently needed reform that ensures all Americans have access to quality, affordable health care. The only thing at risk of being denied is Americans' ability to stay healthy, get healthy, or care for a loved one. It is being delayed by a party that has made such stalling tactics their speciality, as evidenced last night.

The party of no is showing no interest in sitting down with us at the negotiating table. The party of no has shown no interest in legislating. And I am most concerned that the party of no has shown no interest in helping the millions of people who have no insurance and the 20 million who are underinsured and the millions more who are paying too much for health care they could lose with one pink slip, one accident, or one illness. Millions of people are afraid they are going to lose their insurance. That is what this debate is about. It is not just about people who have no insurance, it is about people who have insurance, to keep it. In the last 8 years, the number of uninsured in this country has gone up by 10 million people—10 million people.

So I remind my Republican colleagues again, this is not about winning and losing. This is not the time for ideology. This is not the place for political games. For the millions of Americans who have paid crushing health care costs or those with no coverage at all, it is about a concrete and critical crisis that children, families, and small businesses feel every single day. It is about the parent who cannot afford to take their kid to the doctor because insurance is too expensive. It