

I had a leadership meeting this morning and spent some time talking to them about some examples of things that took place before this law passed. It was very difficult to find ways of helping these women. With this law, it is much easier. We must continue this extremely important legislation. The women who wrote to me had some very sad stories. Without this legislation, it would be even worse.

Coincidentally, I talked to Vice President BIDEN this morning and reminded him of what he had done. He has been watching what we do here. He said thanks for continuing this legislation. It was his idea, and it has been extremely valuable for this country.

Every day in America, three less fortunate women die at the hands of their abusers—by being abused by their spouses. In addition to those three who die, there are nine more who are abused very much. They have serious injuries. Some have been made paralyzed as a result of the beatings. It is hard to believe these beatings take place, but they do. It is in our power—the 100 of us—to protect them and help them.

Reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act would help law enforcement continue to develop effective strategies to prosecute cases involving violent crimes against women. But also, in addition to the criminal aspect of it, it allows these women a place to go.

It would provide funding for shelters and transitional housing programs for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and it would help victims get back on their feet. It would make legal assistance available to victims of violence, and it would safeguard children victimized and affected by dating violence and stalking.

This reauthorization would also enact important improvements to the law, gleaned from 18 years of experience combating violence against women.

It would extend better protections for Native American women. The most significant spousal abuse and abuse to children takes place on Indian reservations. This legislation will enlarge the breadth of the bill to protect these people who are so badly in need of help.

This legislation also includes non-discrimination protection for all victims, regardless of what they look like or where they are from.

It reduces bureaucracy and implements new accountability measures to ensure Federal investments are properly spent.

It places great emphasis on training police to respond to reports of sexual assault, which has among the lowest conviction rates for any violent crime. For police officers, it is one of the most dangerous things they can do. Last year, we had a peace officer in Las Vegas—a sergeant who had been in law enforcement many years—who went with another officer to respond to a domestic violence phone call. He was shot

and killed as he walked in the door. So we do need to understand that we need to continue to help train police and also make them better trained to convict the people doing these bad things.

Many years ago, when I was a freshman in the Senate, I held a hearing, under the auspices of the Appropriations Committee, on spousal abuse. Maybe things have changed over the years—and I hope they have. There are better counseling programs. But one thing we learned during those hearings many decades ago was that the main thing that helped a man stop abusing his wife was to put him in jail. Maybe things are better now. At least we need to have better tools to make it so these people can be convicted of these brutal crimes.

We know the tools and training this legislation provides are effective. Consider this legislation's successful record of reducing domestic violence by 53 percent and helping police punish these abusers. We need to do better, but what we have done has been a big step forward from the time I was holding those hearings, before this legislation became effective.

That is why the Senate reauthorized this law unanimously in 2005, on a 95-to-0 vote. That is pretty good. Again, in 2005, we did it unanimously. And in 2000, we did it by a 95-to-0 vote. Both times it was unanimous. I hope we can do it again.

I look forward to a similar bipartisan vote this year, as Democrats and Republicans join together to renew our national commitment to ending domestic violence.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, before the majority leader leaves the floor, with regard to the Violence Against Women Act, we would be very happy to enter into a short time agreement. He is entirely correct; this law has passed in the Senate on an overwhelming bipartisan basis, and there is very strong bipartisan support for it again this year. We are happy to work with him to expeditiously approve that bill in short order. Those discussions over some kind of a very short time agreement could begin as soon as now. We are happy to work with him to facilitate passage of that.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I think that is a positive statement, as long as there are not efforts made to weaken this legislation. But if this moves forward quickly with a short time agreement, but in an effort to weaken the bill, we want no part of that.

I look forward to conversations to begin with staff and to bring in Senator LEAHY and others, and Senator MCCONNELL and I can work on this.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, there is no reason to fight over something that nobody wants to have a fight over. We are happy to work on a reasonable time agreement and pass that in short order.

BROKEN PROMISES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it is no secret that most Americans are tired of candidates for political office who make promises they don't keep. And who can blame them? For years, politicians have been going to Washington promising to make government more effective, more efficient, to balance the books, make life more secure, and restore Americans' confidence in their country again. And time and time again, they have either failed to get it done or didn't even make an effort in the first place.

Frankly, it is hard to think of any politician who has promised more and delivered less than our current President. He was the one who would erase old divisions and bring people together. He was the one who would rise above politics as usual and usher in a new era of bipartisan harmony. A lot of people believed him. Naturally, a lot of them are even more jaded now than ever. They are jaded because a candidate who said he was different turned out to be just another politician who seems more concerned with reelection than reform. Not only has he failed to step up to the challenges we face, he has actually aggravated them. Social Security, for example, is now expected to go broke 3 years sooner than we expected. The Tax Code is more complicated than ever. The national debt is bigger than any of us could have imagined. Health care costs are higher. Gas prices are up. Millions cannot find work. And even most college graduates—those best equipped to step into the modern economy—either cannot find work to match their skills or can't find any work at all.

Instead of fixing problems, he has made them worse.

What is he doing now? Well, the President who was supposed to change the direction of the country now wants to change the subject. He spends his days running around the country blaming whatever doesn't happen to poll well that day for the consequences of his own policies. He spent 2 years expanding government and constricting free enterprise, and now that the results are in he spends his time pointing the finger at others for problems that originated right in his White House. It is the millionaires; it is the banks; it is big oil; it is the weather; it is Fox News; it is anything but him. And it's absurd. I mean, if you believe that a President who got everything he wanted for 2 years—2 whole years—has nothing to do with the problems we face, then I have a solar panel company to sell you.

The President spent 2 years reshaping America in the image of Western

Europe, and now he wants us to believe our economy is performing as if a Western European economy has nothing to do with it.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the challenges facing the young people in America today. As we all know, one of the defining characteristics of Western European economies is the high unemployment rate, particularly among young people and recent college graduates. Sluggish growth and inflexible labor laws are two of the main reasons young people have been locked out of the labor market in those countries literally for years. Today unemployment is above 20 percent among young people in the European Union. In Spain the unemployment rate among people under the age of 25 is a staggering 50 percent.

Some of this is no doubt a result of the European debt crisis, but the more fundamental problem is decades of policies rooted in the same big government vision the President has been busy imposing right here in the United States. It is hardly a coincidence that as President Obama has tried to reshape the United States in the image of Western Europe, our own youth unemployment rate has been stubbornly high. That is what happens when you increase regulations on businesses that hire college graduates. That is what happens when you impose health care mandates on them. That is what happens when you impose new labor rules, such as the one Senator ENZI is leading the charge against this week that makes it even costlier for businesses to hire. We see the long-term effects of these things in Europe, and unless this President changes course we will see the same lack of opportunity for young people right here.

So today the President will bring his latest poll-tested message to the students at the University of North Carolina, and I am sure he will give a very rousing speech full of straw men and villains who stand in the way of their dreams. I am sure he will also express his strong support for things on which all of us already agree. But what he will not talk about is the extent to which the decisions he has made are limiting their opportunities in the years ahead.

Some of them already see this. I mean, you have to think most of these students are sharp enough to put this President's rhetoric up against his record and to conclude that it simply doesn't add up. As the promises of this President's campaign collide with real life, I think young people across the country will realize they got sold a bill of goods. The next time they are promised change, they will know enough to kick the tires first.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EXTENSION ACT OF 2012, PART II

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4348) to provide an extension of Federal-aid highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund pending enactment of a multiyear law reauthorizing such programs, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, all after the enacting clause is stricken and the text of S. 1813, as passed by the Senate, is inserted in lieu thereof.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the bill (H.R. 4348), as amended, is passed and the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

Under the previous order, the Senate insists on its amendment, requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses, and the Chair appoints the following conferees on the part of the Senate.

The Acting President pro tempore appointed Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. VITTER, Mr. HATCH, Mr. SHELBY, Mrs. HUTCHISON, and Mr. HOEVEN conferees on the part of the Senate.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2011—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1925, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S. 1925, a bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act of 1994.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from California.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am very pleased with what just happened at the desk. For those who didn't follow it, the majority leader, Senator REID, and Senator MCCONNELL, just named the conferees so we can get moving with the House and settle our differences and move forward with a very important transportation bill.

We all know how hard it has been on the construction industry. We all know the housing crisis has made it very difficult for our construction workers to get work. We all know at the same moment we have had this real problem in the construction industry—where we have well over 1 million construction workers out of work and tens of thousands of businesses that want to do

construction work—70,000 of our bridges are failing, half of our roads are in disrepair, and the American people expect an infrastructure that meets the needs of the strongest economy in the world, our economy.

So I am very pleased with what just happened. I am very pleased we see the continuation over here of bipartisan support for a transportation bill. We have Senator REID working together with Senator MCCONNELL to name the conferees, and we had a unanimous vote in our committee last year on this bill. It has been a very tortured path to get to where we are now because, for some inexplicable reason, the Republicans over in the House have insisted on just going to their own party to reach agreement rather than going to the Democrats so we can have bipartisanship over there. But I am very hopeful, with the naming of these conferees today, the House will now do its job and name conferees. I have been reading in the press that perhaps that will happen tomorrow. So I am very hopeful.

Mr. President, it is 10:20 in the morning on Tuesday, and I want to call attention to the fact we are now on the path we need to be on, starting at this moment, to get to conference. There is no reason we can't do that very soon when so much is at stake.

The Senate bill is a reform bill. There are no earmarks in that bill. That bill is fully paid for. It doesn't add to the deficit. It protects 2 million jobs and creates another 1 million jobs. What good news will it be for this economy to have this bill pass.

I know there are those who predicted this could never happen; that, A, we would never get a bipartisan bill out of our committee, but we did it; that, B, we would never get it to pass on the floor, but we did it with 74 votes; and, C, that the House will never act, and the House actually did act to move to conference. It took them a long time, but we are there. So there is no reason we cannot work together to get this done.

If Senator INHOFE and I can agree, then I think we should be able to get a very strong bill through both Houses. On my committee—the Environment and Public Works Committee, which I am so privileged to chair—we have very conservative members, such as Senators INHOFE and SESSIONS, and very progressive members, such as myself. We have Senator VITTER on the other side and Senator SESSIONS, and on this side we have Senators SANDERS and CARDIN. So we have members who reach the entire ideological spectrum, and if we can all vote for a bill, then this can happen and it will send a great signal to this country.

I thank all the groups that have worked so hard to bring pressure on all of us to keep this moving forward. It starts with a coalition that includes the AFL-CIO and the chamber of commerce. Good for them. They do not always agree, but they agree on this one.