

the page and write a new and more hopeful beginning. This is our chance to work toward a healthier and more prosperous future, with true reform that moves beyond the failures of a broken law.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE NEW CONGRESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, in the past few days I have noted some of the achievements of a new Congress that is back to work on the side of the American people. We have passed bills no one ever thought Washington could touch. We have made reforms that have previously languished for years without result. Even more remarkably, we have often done so on a bipartisanship basis.

Consider just the bills I have mentioned already:

A landmark, bipartisan education bill that would take decisionmaking away from distant Federal bureaucrats in order to empower parents and teachers instead. The pundits said we would never pass it. We did, 81 to 17.

A breakthrough, bipartisan highway bill that would finally provide States and local governments the kind of certainty they need to focus on longer term road and bridge projects. After years of short-term extensions, this long-term highway bill passed the new Senate 65 to 34.

A milestone, bipartisan cyber security bill that would protect the personal information of people we represent by defeating cyber attacks through the sharing of information. The issue languished in previous Congresses, but this Senate passed it with 74 votes.

Today, I would like to mention another important bill this new Congress has passed. It is hard for many Americans to believe that human trafficking—modern-day slavery—can happen where they live, but it does right here in our country. It happens in all 50 of our States. In Kentucky alone, the Commonwealth has been able to identify more than 100 victims since they began keeping relevant records in 2013. This kind of abuse often begins around the age of 13 or 14.

The victims of modern slavery deserve a voice. They deserve justice. After years of inaction, the new Congress was determined to give them both. Of course, there was an unforeseen impediment, to put it mildly, to getting this bill done, but success was possible because the new majority kept its focus on facts, on substance, and on good policy for the people who have always remained our focus throughout the debate, the victims of modern slavery.

The bill we ultimately passed with strong bipartisan support, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, represents a vital ray of hope for the countless victims of modern slavery who need our help. Victims groups and advocates told us that this human

rights legislation would provide unprecedented support to domestic victims of trafficking. They urged the Congress to pass it. We did. The President signed it into law as well. It proves that with unwavering compassion and unbowed determination—something Senator CORNYN knows a thing or two about—justice can prevail. I am grateful to him and so many other Senators for working so hard to ensure that it ultimately did.

The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act was another important step forward for our country. It is another example of what we can achieve in a new Congress that is back to work for the American people.

#### MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 427

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 427) to amend chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, to provide that major rules of the executive branch shall have no force or effect unless a joint resolution of approval is enacted into law.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### WORK OF THE SENATE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Republican leader comes to the floor virtually every day and talks about this great new Senate.

He talked about the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We tried to do that many times. It was blocked by Republicans. That is why it was not done before.

Highways. We tried valiantly to do something on highways, but all we could ever get, because of the obstruction of the Republicans, was short-term extensions.

Cyber security. My friend the Republican leader comes to the floor and talks about, we got cyber security done. We got it done. It is not a great bill. It is better than nothing. But we tried for years—5 years. Every time we tried, it was blocked by Republicans.

One of the newspapers here has a Pinocchio check. They look at the facts and analyze them, and they can give up to four Pinocchios, meaning people simply did not tell the truth.

So I want to remind everybody here that I am happy to participate in get-

ting something done with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, led by, on our side, the senior Senator from Washington. We were able to get that done because of her good work and others. It was not because we did not try before. We could not get it done before because of the obstruction of the Republicans.

This is the most unproductive Senate in the history of the country, and there are facts and figures to show that. So we are not going to be awarding Pinocchios here based on the statements of my friend the Republican leader, but everyone should understand there are different ways of presenting the facts. It is always best to present facts that are accurate. He said, for example, that bills—TSA, highways, and cyber—languished in the Senate. That is true, because of Republican filibusters. We tried to pass those bills in the last two Congresses. They were blocked by Republicans. We are now helping pass legislation, and that is our job. The job of Republicans was to oppose everything President Obama wanted, and that is, in fact, what was done.

#### OBAMACARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on ObamaCare, one newspaper reports:

Fewer Patients Have Been Dying From Hospital Errors Since ObamaCare Started.

Report says about 87,000 lives have been saved since 2010.

This is as a result of that legislation. I am not going to read the whole article.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the article to which I just referred.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Huffington Post, Dec. 1, 2015]

FEWER PATIENTS HAVE BEEN DYING FROM HOSPITAL ERRORS SINCE OBAMACARE STARTED

(By Jonathan Cohn)

Hospitals have cut down on deadly medical errors, saving around 87,000 lives since 2010, according to a new government report.

Pinning down the precise reasons for this change is difficult, to say nothing of predicting whether the decline will continue. Improvement has slowed in just the last year, the report suggests. But many analysts think government initiatives within the Affordable Care Act have played a significant role in the progress so far.

In short, Obamacare may literally be saving lives.

The new report comes from Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services and is something like an in-house think tank dedicated to making medical care safer and more effective. Since 2010, the agency has been tracking the incidence of common and frequently fatal medical errors, which include everything from a nurse accidentally giving a patient the wrong medication to a doctor inserting an intravenous line in a way that leads to a blood-borne infection.

On Tuesday, the agency announced its latest findings on these "hospital-acquired conditions," based on preliminary data from 2014. For every 1,000 patients admitted to and

then discharged from a hospital, the agency found, roughly 121 of them developed such a condition. That rate is unchanged from last year, but it is down 17 percent from 2010, when it was about 145 out of every 1,000 patients.

Based on the existing research about what happens to patients who get sick in the hospital and what it costs to treat them afterwards, that decline works out to roughly 87,000 lives saved and \$19.8 billion not spent on extra medical care, according to the report.

"The progress is historic," David Blumenthal, president of the Commonwealth Fund, told *The Huffington Post*.

"We have never demonstrated a comparable decline in the history of the U.S. health system," added Blumenthal, a physician and researcher who also served in the Obama administration.

Broadly speaking, the progress is the result of a crusade that dates back at least to 1990s, when the Institute of Medicine released "To Err Is Human," a seminal report suggesting that nearly 100,000 people were dying each year because of preventable medical mistakes. Over time, researchers learned more about why these errors were so common and started developing methods for avoiding them. Probably the most famous of these was the introduction of checklists, like the ones that airplane pilots use before take-off, for making surgery safer.

But getting hospitals to adopt these methods was difficult, despite the best efforts of some private-sector organizations, in part because existing financial incentives did not reward hospitals for improving quality. If anything, the opposite was true. Hospitals made money for every new treatment and a patient who got sick in the hospital needed more care, rather than less.

A major goal of the Affordable Care Act was to reduce and eventually eliminate these incentives for poor quality care, while rewarding the hospitals that get better results. Today, for example, Medicare pays less to institutions with high rates of hospital-acquired infection, injury and readmission—in other words, large numbers of patients returning to the hospital for treatment shortly after discharge. That's because of a series of penalties the health care law created in 2010, which started affecting hospital revenue three years later. And under an initiative called Partnership for Patients, the federal government provides extra funding to hospitals that agree to monitor patient safety and implement schemes for improving quality.

Experts can't be sure about the impact of these reforms, in part because previous studies showed that errors were declining even before 2010, albeit at a slower rate. And the new initiatives raise plenty of serious criticisms—whether from hospital officials saying they are cumbersome to implement or from researchers who think the underlying data is unreliable.

But after the agency published last year's results, showing the steep decline in errors, a wide array of experts said the law's new incentives were influencing hospital behavior—and that, as a result, patients were getting better care. Lucian Leape, a professor at the Harvard School of Public Health and a pioneer in the patient safety movement, told *Politifact*, "I think these data reliable, and the ACA (Affordable Care Act) deserves credit."

The real cautionary note in Tuesday's report may be what it says about the future. If this year's preliminary data holds up, and the error rate for 2014 is truly no lower than it was for 2013, that would suggest progress had stalled—with infections and injuries lower than before, but not as low as they could be.

"On the positive side, there has been no backsliding, so hospitals are, in the lingo of quality improvement, 'holding the gains,'" Blumenthal said. "But from the standpoint of public policy and given our obligation to eliminate preventable problems, we would should aim to see continued reductions in rates."

HHS officials on Tuesday offered similar thoughts. At a conference in Baltimore focusing on health care quality, an announcement of the new data drew large applause. But Patrick Conway, chief medical officer at the federal government's Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, warned his audience not to be complacent. "The goal is to get to zero" errors, he said. "We've made significant progress. Now the question is how you accelerate that."

Mr. REID. Mr. President, among other things, this article says: "Hospitals have cut down on deadly medical errors, saving around 87,000 lives since 2010, according to a new government report."

I am not going to read the whole thing, but it is part of the RECORD.

The article also says:

Many analysts think government initiatives within the Affordable Care Act have played a significant role in the progress so far.

In short, ObamaCare may literally be saving lives.

The new report comes from Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. . . . On Tuesday, the agency announced its latest findings on these "hospital-acquired conditions". . . . That rate is unchanged from last year, but it is down 17 percent from 2010, when it was about 145 out of every 1,000 patients.

That is not the case anymore.

Continuing:

That decline works out to roughly 87,000 lives saved and \$19.8 billion not spent on extra medical care, according to the report. . . . A major goal of the Affordable Care Act was to reduce and eventually eliminate these incentives for poor quality care, while rewarding the hospitals that get better results. Today, for example, Medicare pays less to institutions with high rates of hospital-acquired infection, injury and readmission—in other words, large numbers of patients returning to the hospital for treatment shortly after discharge. . . . And under an initiative called Partnership for Patients, the federal government provides extra funding to hospitals that agree to monitor patient safety and implement schemes for improving quality.

So to my friend who continually berates ObamaCare, we have before us today and tomorrow an effort to show how wasteful the time is trying to wipe out ObamaCare. The House has voted 46 times. The Republicans, of course, have lost every time. In the Senate, I think it has been 16 times or 17 times trying to repeal ObamaCare. Each time, it failed, as it will fail in the next day or two.

#### RHETORIC OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, when Americans elect leaders, they do so in good faith. Our constituents want us to govern responsibly and work to embody American values. Both elected of-

ficials and candidates must realize that our words have deep meaning and can influence people far and wide. That is why I am very disappointed that instead of talking about issues important to the middle class, the Republicans have turned to the politics of hatred and division.

It seems no one is safe from this Republican vitriol. Republicans demagogue women seeking health care through Planned Parenthood. Republican candidates use women, infants, and children seeking refuge from terrorism to fearmonger. Muslim Americans, immigrants, and even Americans exercising their constitutional rights in support of the Black Lives Matter movement are all subject to Republican insults and slander.

Over and over again, Republican candidates have resorted to hatred instead of appealing to the highest sensibilities of the American people. We all know that on race and other controversial issues, Republicans have long practiced subtle bigotry, but Republicans now simply say out loud the many things at which they used to merely hint.

Words have power, and when spoken by influential leaders, they infiltrate every corner of our society.

In the wake of last week's murderous attack at a Planned Parenthood health center in Colorado, a leading conservative activist said:

It really is surprising more Planned Parenthood facilities and abortionists are not being targeted.

Given the public light shed on the atrocities committed by Planned Parenthood and both the government and media's turning a blind eye to it . . . it really should be surprising that Americans convicted of the need to stop the murder of children have not taken the law into their own hands.

That is what the quote says.

We know how exaggerated, untruthful, and unfair the film was that was put together as some B-grade movie and that has so maligned Planned Parenthood. One out of every five American women will go to Planned Parenthood during her lifetime. It is the only health care that women have in many parts of America. Is that the kind of language you want to encourage in the United States of America, that there should be more violence in these health clinics? Certainly not, but it is all too common in the Republican Party of today.

Instead of recognizing the concerns of communities riddled by decades of police brutality and racial injustice, Republicans have vilified the Black Lives Matter movement, which has been drawing attention to these disturbing inequities. Rush Limbaugh has gone so far as labeling protesters a "hate group" for trying to bring equality to our criminal justice system.

Just a few weeks ago, supporters of the Republican Presidential hopeful Donald Trump attacked a Black Lives Matter protester on video at a rally. Instead of condemning the violence displayed by his supporters, Donald Trump encouraged it. When asked