

this health care plan makes it harder to hire more employees. I heard from a small business owner in Indiana who runs an employment management service. He told me small businesses such as his have decided to use a combination of cuts to keep many of their employees under 30 hours a week to avoid penalties, while pushing full-time workers well over 45 hours a week. Well, that is fine for the full-time workers who are getting some overtime pay, but it is denying job opportunities for new hires because employers are put in this position by the mandates of the health care act. It is not just limited to the private sector. I recently heard from a State representative in Indiana who is concerned about how this law is going to affect school districts in his area. He says some schools are being forced to move nonteacher personnel to part-time status, affecting food service providers, teacher's aides, bus drivers, substitute teachers, maintenance personnel, as well as nonteacher coaches. People from all walks of life have a dark cloud of uncertainty over their future plans to run a business, to hire employees, and to do what is necessary to expand their business, and that is so desperately needed, given we are now entering the fifth year of underemployment in this country. So that incentive to employ part-time workers means fewer hours, lower wages, less economic growth, less production, and it means middle-class Americans will continue to pay the price of Washington's ineptness.

One of our colleagues here said it best about the implementation of the health care law: "I just see a huge train wreck coming down." I think it is becoming clear that we all see a huge train wreck coming down. If both sides of the aisle here understand this is a train wreck, then let's do something about it now before it hits. Let's stop the train from crashing before its full impact on the economy takes effect.

Americans want health care reform that is an improvement but not a burden. We need to replace ObamaCare with commonsense health care reforms that will lower costs without penalizing American workers and job creators. If we don't act—if we don't stop this train wreck from happening—we will continue to see a struggling economy with anemic growth and the American people will continue to pay the high price.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that myself, Senator LEVIN, Senator MENENDEZ, and Senator GRAHAM be permitted to participate in a colloquy for up to 40 minutes.

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

Mr. McCAIN. If it is agreeable to Senator LEVIN, I say to my friend from

South Carolina, we could each make a brief opening statement, maybe a 6-, 7-minute opening statement, and then maybe have a colloquy amongst us. Is that agreeable to the Senator from Michigan?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. It is agreeable to me. My statement will probably be about 7 or 8 minutes. I don't know how long Senator MENENDEZ—because he is the fourth Senator who will participate—how long his statement will be, but if 40 minutes is what the Senator from Arizona sought, I think that ought to be enough.

Mr. McCAIN. I thank my colleagues. I wish to thank my dear friend from South Carolina whose efforts on another issue in Benghazi have brought the attention of the American people to a tragic situation that happened there. We need to place responsibility for it, and if it had not been for his tenacity and effort on this issue, I do not believe it would have been brought to the attention of the American people yesterday. So I wish to thank him for his usual and unusual continuation of efforts on behalf of the families who were killed.

SYRIA

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, today I and my colleagues are here to speak about Syria. The strategic and humanitarian costs of this conflict continue to be devastating, not just for the people of Syria but for vital American interests. As today's Washington Post editorial makes clear, nearly all of the terrible consequences that those opposed to intervention predicted would happen if we intervened in Syria have happened because we have not.

There is mounting evidence that chemical weapons have been used by the Asad regime. As many of our colleagues have noted—including Senator FEINSTEIN, the chairman of the Intelligence Committee—President Obama's redline on Syria has been crossed. But instead of acting, the Obama administration has called for additional evidence to be collected by U.N. investigators who have not yet set foot in Syria and probably never will. In the absence of more robust action, I fear it will not be long before Asad takes this delay as an invitation to use chemical weapons again on an even larger scale.

Moreover, as I have said before, by drawing a redline on chemical weapons, the President actually gave the Asad regime a green light to use every other weapon in his arsenal with impunity. More than 70,000 Syrians have been killed indiscriminately with snipers, artillery, helicopter gunships, fighter jets, and even ballistic missiles. Indeed, according to a recent Human Rights Watch report, more than 4,300 civilians have been killed by Syria's airstrikes alone since July 2012.

At the same time, Iran and its proxy Hezbollah are building a network of

militias inside Syria and the al-Qaida-aligned al-Nusra Front has gained unprecedented strength on the ground. According to estimates published in the media, some believe there were no more than a few hundred al-Nusra fighters in Syria last year, but today it is widely believed there could be thousands of extremist fighters inside Syria. They are gaining strength by the day because they are the best, most experienced fighters. They are well-funded and are providing humanitarian assistance in the parts of Syria where people need it most.

At the same time, this conflict is having increasingly devastating consequences to the security and stability of our allies and partners in Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and Lebanon. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees has characterized the situation in Syria as an "existential threat" for Lebanon, where the government estimates that 1 million Syrians have entered the country—1 million Syrians have entered the country of Lebanon—which has a population of just over 4 million. Similarly, over the past 2 years, more than 500,000 Syrians have flooded into Jordan, a country of only 6 million people. Consider for a moment that in proportional terms this would be equivalent to 26 million refugees, or the entire population of Texas, suddenly crossing our own borders.

In short, Syria is becoming a failed state in the heart of the Middle East overrun by thousands of al-Qaida-affiliated fighters, with possibly tons of chemical weapons, and poised to ignite a wider sectarian conflict that could profoundly destabilize the region.

Yesterday brought news that the administration plans to organize, together with Russia, an international peace conference later this month to seek a negotiated settlement to the war in Syria. All of us—all of us—are in favor of such a political resolution to this conflict. No one wants to see this conflict turn into a fight to the death and total victory for one side or the other. We all want to work toward a political settlement that forms a new governing structure in Syria reflective of the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people.

But let's be realistic. One of the lessons of the past 2 years is that such a negotiated settlement will not be possible in Syria until the balance of power shifts more decisively against Asad and those around him. Until Asad, as well as his Iranian, Hezbollah, and Russian backers no longer believe they are winning, what incentive do they have to come to the table and make a deal? This is what two well-meaning United Nations senior envoys have already learned.

Yes, Syrian opposition forces are gaining strength and territory on the ground. But Asad still has air power—a decisive factor in that climate, in that terrain—ballistic missiles, chemical weapons, and a host of other advanced weaponry, and he is using all of