

Is there anything further from the truth?

I don't think so. This is an Iraqi civil war, and it is time for the Iraqis to resolve it themselves. Those who attack President Obama for bringing our troops home from Iraq are wrong and out of step with the American people. After a decade of war the American people have had enough. American families have had enough. I do not support in any way putting our men and women in the midst of this civil war in Iraq. It is not in the national security interests of our country. It is not worth the blood of American soldiers. It is not worth the monetary cost to the American taxpayer.

Rather than spending hundreds of billions of dollars—the war in Iraq is at about \$1.5 trillion. Rather than spending more money doing that—fighting George W. Bush's war—how about we use that money to rebuild our Nation's infrastructure—roads, bridges, dams, water systems, sewer systems. We have a deficit in infrastructure of trillions of dollars.

How about doing a better job of educating our children? Maybe we could raise the minimum wage or give the long-term unemployed unemployment compensation or maybe we could help men and women draw the same amount of money for doing the same work or maybe we could fully fund the Veterans' Administration and ensure that our veterans—more than a million have come back from Iraq—are getting the care they need and deserve. Instead of addressing these issues at home, they are stuck in the same game. And it is not blame Obama; this is a new one—new yesterday or the day before. They are stuck listening to the very same neocons—obviously, that is where the Republicans are getting their information again—the same neocons who pushed us into the Iraq war in the first place, as they try to plunge our military in yet another foreign misadventure.

What is absurd is the fact that after all these years their suggestions haven't changed. They are in a time warp. Those who are the so-called experts are so eager to commit American soldiers to another war. Why is their advice so valuable?

Take President Bush's Paul Wolfowitz, who some say was the architect of the war. He has accused President Obama recently of not taking a strong position in Iraq. Wolfowitz took a strong position on Iraq's sectarian violence when he stated—listen to this bizarre statement—and this is a quote: "There's been none of the record in Iraq of ethnic militias fighting one another." No, only for centuries. Look at what he said: There is none of the record in Iraq of militias fighting each other. That is Wolfowitz.

How about Bill Kristol—not the comedian. He is a writer. Bill Kristol is another one of the architects of the Iraq war who infamously predicted that American soldiers would be wel-

comed as liberators in Iraq. He said the war would last 2 months. Well, he was only wrong by about 9 years and 10 months. Kristol also claimed there was no evidence of discord among Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq. No? Only centuries of discord—centuries. Yet even in light of this incorrect assertion about Iraq, Kristol went on to say that we need to have more fighting in Iraq, beating the drum alongside all the neoconservative friends.

This morning there was an op-ed piece in the Wall Street Journal. Who would write that? How about Dick Cheney? Just to remind everyone, he is the former Vice President of the United States, who clearly was the chief architect of the war. If there is one thing this country does not need, it is that we should be taking advice from Dick Cheney on wars. Being on the wrong side of Dick Cheney is being on the right side of history.

To the architects of the Iraq war, who are now so eager to offer their expert analysis, I say thanks but no thanks. Unfortunately, we already tried it your way, and it was the biggest foreign policy blunder in the history of the country. Now people come back and say they can give me some examples that have been worse, and I listen. But for me—I know a little bit about history—this was a foreign policy blunder that would be hard to take away from being the number one foreign policy blunder in the history of the country.

President Obama and his military advisors are considering their options to address ISIS, but putting combat troops back in Iraq isn't one of them. I have no doubt that President Obama and America will meet this threat head-on without the advice of Wolfowitz, Cheney, Kristol—the architects of the invasion of Iraq. President Obama will meet the threat with the same smart foreign policy which has been the hallmark of his administration. The President will continue to identify and protect what is truly in our national security interests, using our full array of national security tools and standing up to terrorism where it threatens our national stability.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. MCCONNELL. For 5½ years the Obama administration and its allies in Congress have sought cover for their disastrous economic agenda with routine broadsides against an endless procession of straw men. It is hard to recall a single speech from a Democratic leader in Washington that didn't involve some spirited defense of a principle nobody ever challenged or some attack on a villain that doesn't exist. Instead of working with us on ideas

that would actually do something to alleviate the concerns and anxieties of the middle class, these Democratic leaders have been blissfully content to play politics year after year after year.

Instead of delivering relief, they have delivered a steady diet of bad political theater day in and day out with the same ridiculous and predictable moral every single time: Democrats care. So vote for them and all will be well.

If you haven't noticed, all is not well for working families in this country. Four years after administration officials trumpeted "recovery summer" in June 2010, working men and women in this country are more anxious about work and family and the high cost of living—and that is to say nothing of the millions who can't find work at all.

The White House knows all of this, and that is why they are planning to hold a summit on the topic next week. They want everyone to think they are on the case, that they have a plan, but what they don't seem to realize is nobody believes them anymore and that folks have moved on.

The sad truth is most of the folks I have talked to are convinced government is working against them, not for them. I don't blame them. Whether it is frustration over an absurdly complicated Tax Code that drains people of their time and energy or just a general sense that government programs are rigged to help the well-off and well-connected, an increasing number of our constituents don't even think government is capable—let alone interested—in making their lives any easier these days. It is a shame because while the Obama administration has been playing politics, Republicans have been quietly assembling a lot of good ideas to help Americans deal with the stresses of a modern economy.

All of these ideas are consistent with our party's longstanding commitment to the principles of upward mobility, shared responsibility for the weak, and a strong but limited central government. Every single one of them deserves a vote.

For my part, I have pressed for legislation that addresses a variety of concerns of the people in my State. The Family Friendly and Workplace Flexibility Act, which I introduced with Senator AYOTTE, would enable working mothers to enter into a voluntary agreement with their employers whereby they could bank overtime compensation in the form of time off with their families. It would give families the choice, not just the employer.

Another bill I will introduce today will fix a flaw in the Tax Code so men or women who work at home are not prevented from claiming a deduction for a home office if that office includes a baby crib so they can take care of their child while working. The Working Parents Home Office Act would not only help parents save on childcare costs, it would help increase their earning potential by incentivizing them to create new income streams from home.

For parents worried about failing schools for their children, Senator KIRK introduced the Expanding Opportunity Through Quality Charter Schools Act—a bill that would provide more and better educational choices and some much needed compensation for teachers unions that too often put their own interests above those of our children.

Then there is the National Right to Work Act, a bill I cosponsored with Senator PAUL, which will eliminate a Federal rule that requires employees of certain companies to join a union or pay union dues whether they want to or not. Lifting this rule would vastly increase job opportunities in my State for women and men who want to work but can't find it, especially in the area of manufacturing.

The senior Senator from Maine has a proposal that would repeal a senseless provision in ObamaCare that is incentivizing employers all across the country to limit their employees to 30 hours a week.

The junior Senator from Nebraska has a bill—the Workplace Advancement Act—that would further equip women in the workplace with the knowledge and tools they need to fight employer discrimination.

The junior Senator from Florida has a bill—the RAISE Act—that would amend the National Labor Relations Act to allow employers to give merit-based pay increases to employees who are currently prohibited from receiving them because of outdated labor rules, and the junior Senator from Utah has a number of good proposals in a variety of areas.

These are just a few of the very good ideas that Members of my conference have put together to address the concerns and anxieties of working men and women whose wages have remained stubbornly flat during the Obama years, even as the cost of everything from college tuition to health care continues to soar. There are many others, including bills passed by the House that the Democratic majority in the Senate continues to block.

I am very proud of the work so many of my colleagues have done in putting all this legislation together. This morning some of us will present a number of these ideas at a press conference to draw attention to the urgent needs of our constituents and the shortsightedness of the majority leader in blocking our ideas to address them. Every one of these Republican ideas is meant to address some common concern of working families in our country, but none of them ever get a vote because it would not fit the story line Washington Democrats are peddling.

Apparently Senate Democrats would rather people didn't know Republicans have been working overtime behind the scenes to make their lives easier or paychecks bigger for working moms and recent college graduates. They would rather people didn't even know about these or dozens of other ideas we

have that are aimed at making life a little easier for middle-class Americans, because if they did, they might realize there is an entirely different approach to the problems that have been plaguing this economy for years now and choose it over theirs.

What Republicans have been saying is that there are a number of things we can do right now to help folks deal with the pressures they face every day in this economy. We have been talking about these ideas for years, and we will be talking about them later today because 5½ years into the Obama economy Americans are eager for some fresh thinking. They are tired of the same old big government solutions that only make life harder and more complicated. They are tired of a Democratically controlled Senate that will not allow a debate or a vote on any of our better proposals.

Most of our constituents are thinking about long commutes, shrinking budgets, obscenely high tuition and health care bills. They think about how nice it would be to have some more flexibility at work. They are frustrated with a Tax Code that seems to punish their efforts to make a little bit more money for their family, and they are not getting anything from the White House but empty rhetoric and more of the same.

Today Republicans are reminding people there is another way. While Democrats have been plotting ways to hold on to their majority, we have been listening to the concerns and anxieties of our constituents and figuring out new, creative ways to address them.

It is long past time we had a real debate in this country, instead of the false choice Democrats constantly present to the public between their own failed ideas and some political villain that doesn't exist. It is time Americans saw the real choice before them, and once they do, I think the choice will be an easy one.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

MASTER SERGEANT AARON C. TORIAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning I wish to commemorate the life and service of a brave U.S. marine from Paducah, KY, MSgt Aaron C. Torian. This highly accomplished marine was tragically killed on February 15, 2014, from injuries sustained during combat training operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. He was 36 years old.

For his service in uniform, Master Sergeant Torian received many medals, awards, and decorations—including the Purple Heart, the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device, the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, the Combat Action Ribbon with Gold Star, the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon with three stars, the Global War on Terrorism Ex-

peditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, and the Good Conduct Medal.

When he was 28, Master Sergeant Torian was named the Second Marine Division's Noncommissioned Officer of the Year. It is a high honor. This distinction recognizes marines who excel in physical fitness, leadership skills, and tactical and technical proficiency. Receiving it made Aaron a role model for hundreds of NCOs in the Second Marine Division.

At the time he won the award, he simply said:

I had to step up. I just figured that this is what I'd joined the Marine Corps to do, and so I always did it 100 percent.

"His work ethic was remarkable," says Aaron's mother Esta Smith. She said:

He was a warrior as a marine. . . . He ultimately gave everything for his country and he never put himself anything but last. He gave everything because he loved his country.

Born in 1977, Aaron was a native of Paducah and grew up in the region before his family moved to Maryland. Aaron graduated from Thomas Stone High School in Waldorf, MD, where he was a star athlete in baseball and football. He was awarded a football scholarship to the University of Tennessee at Martin, where he graduated in 2001. Aaron then went on to earn a master's degree in instructional leadership at Tennessee Tech in 2003.

Aaron's time at Tennessee Tech was notable for a few other reasons besides his degree. He worked as a graduate assistant football coach, and he also met the woman who would become his wife, Jurley Pomeroy. Together the couple had three children.

"He was a great dad and always everything his children needed him to be," says his wife Jurley. "When he got off the plane, being the best dad and best husband was his number-one priority."

Aaron joined the Marine Corps in 2003 and promoted to Master Sergeant in September of 2013. In addition to being a wonderful father and husband and an exemplary marine, he was a faithful member of College Acres Baptist Church in Wilmington, NC. He was a community volunteer for his local college baseball grounds crew and also at the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church annual Greek festival.

Aaron's mother said:

Aaron held on to the thing he believed in: faith, love, and freedom. . . . The conversation was always about how blessed he felt and how he thanked God for his beautiful family. Humility was the definition of Aaron.

Aaron's final deployment was his sixth in total. He served two tours in Iraq and four in Afghanistan. At the time of his final deployment, he was assigned to the Second Marine Special Operations Battalion, Marine Special Operations Regiment, U.S. Marine