

don't have a highway bill, and we have people on the other side of the aisle come out here and want to blame Senator DASCHLE for it. What a load of nonsense. It is simply not true. We don't have a highway bill because the majority party that controls the Senate and the House and the Presidency cannot agree and are having this internal feud on how big the bill ought to be, how much we invest in this country's highways.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to continue for 10 additional minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. What about an energy bill. We ought to have an energy policy. You look at the price of gas at the gas pumps these days and ask yourself, Do we want to continue to be more and more dependent on foreign sources of oil? It went from 50 percent to 60 percent. Does that make sense for our country? Our economy will be belly up at some point if, God forbid, terrorists shut off the supply of oil to our country. Yet we rely on the Saudis, Iraqis, and so many others from troubled parts of the world for our supply of oil. We need an energy bill.

Don't point at Senator DASCHLE and don't point at the Democrat Caucus with respect to that issue. That bill failed the Senate by two votes, and my colleague, Senator DASCHLE, voted for it, as did I and others. The reason that bill failed in the Senate by two votes was because the majority leader of the House stuck a provision in it that he was warned would kill that bill, a retroactive waiver for liability for something called MTBE, a pernicious provision that he knew—he should have known; he was warned—would kill the bill. So they stick in a giveaway provision that kills the bill because it costs them four or five votes in the Senate, and then they want to come to the floor and point at the Democratic leader, Senator DASCHLE, as the problem. He is not the problem. The problem is the majority party that controls the House and the Senate and the White House.

We need an energy policy. In fact, we should have had the energy bill back on the floor of the Senate 2 weeks ago, but we don't control the Senate. We don't schedule the Senate.

Appropriations bills: I am a member of the Appropriations Committee. Last year we had to put seven appropriations bills into one big omnibus appropriations because we didn't get the appropriations bills done. Then in the middle of all that, the appropriations bill, with well over \$300 billion—smack dab in the middle of that, those of us who were trying to overturn the FCC rules which would allow big broadcasters to become even bigger, and fewer and fewer people would control what you see, hear, and read in this country—they stuck right in the middle of this big appropriations bill some-

thing that upended our attempt to deal with the FCC rules. They stuck, right in the middle of this, something that interrupted the ability to affect the country-of-origin labeling for meat and other food products.

I tell you, it is a hollow claim, it seems to me, that there is obstructionism from this side of the aisle. It is a hollow claim that Senator DASCHLE is somehow guilty of obstructionism. The obstructionism on things that would improve this country, public policy dealing with—yes, the minimum wage increase, with country-of-origin labeling, with an energy bill, with a highway bill that means new jobs and new investment, with lowering prescription drug prices, with extending unemployment benefits to people whose benefits have run out during a time of economic trouble—all of those issues, all of those things that, in my judgment, would make this a better country and would improve things in this country have been stopped.

They have been stopped because one party controls the House, the same party controls the Senate, the same party controls the White House, and they have stopped these things dead. It is as simple as that.

Abraham Lincoln once said, "Die when I may, I want it said by those who know me best that I have always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow." I must say there are precious few thistle pluckers or flower planters these days in this political system. There are a lot of political flame throwers and those who decide everything they don't like ought to be put at the feet of the minority Caucus in the Senate and the minority leader of the Senate, Senator DASCHLE.

The Constitution of this country begins, "We the people." Some in the Senate think the Constitution is a rough draft—something they ought to change every month, every week. We are apparently going to vote on three constitutional amendments very soon in the Senate because that work which occurred over two centuries ago and which has been amended outside of the Bill of Rights only 17 times needs, according to the majority, to be amended again and again and again. I think that Constitution of ours is pretty important. That Constitution provides an opportunity for a minority in Congress to stop bad things from happening. But it also empowers the minority to push good public policy.

We have as a Caucus offered a substantial amount of good public policy that would improve things in this country, provide hope and opportunity, and do what every American would want to have happen; that is, leave a country for their children that is better than the country they found when they were born into this great country of ours. All of us are lucky to be here and lucky to be here now. There is only one place on this Earth—only one place—named the U.S.A. This big, old

globe of ours spins with 6 billion people on it. There is only one location on this big globe with 6 billion people called the U.S.A. We are lucky to be born here and lucky to be born now with all the opportunities and all the bounties that are offered to us as Americans. But with those bounties come responsibility. The responsibility is, in my judgment, to work together.

I am weary and tired of those who continue to point the finger of obstructionism and who continue to organize these "anti" messages, anti-Daschle, anti-Democrat, anti-this, anti-that. I have no time at all for those who, as my former colleague Newt Gingrich did, put out word lists to pollute the political process in this country and say to those who aspire to serve in public service the way you ought to refer to your opponent is with words like "sick," "pathetic," "betray," and "poison." Shame on them. That is not the best this political system has to offer. John F. Kennedy used to say every mother hopes her child might grow up to be President as long as they do not have to be active in politics. But, of course, politics is the basis for making public decisions in our country. It is an honorable occupation. The practice, in the main, is by people who care a great deal about this country's future.

I hope all of us will understand this isn't about trying to figure out who is setting up roadblocks and who is obstructing. Let us try to sort out between good and bad public policy and then pass the good.

Let me say again this message—this organizing for anti-Daschle, anti-Democratic Caucus, obstruction message—to those who spend time doing that, this country is at war. This country has an economy that is still troubled. This country needs an energy policy. This country has so many needs that require so much attention from all of us. Stop this nonsense. Let us decide to work together to make this country work better for our children.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, we are in a period of what we call morning business. But we know when we go back to what is referred to as the JOBS bill we will be on the Cantwell amendment which is to extend unemployment compensation to workers who have worked hard over the course of their lives and contributed into the unemployment compensation fund, the fund that today is approximately \$14 billion in surplus. The Cantwell amendment is about \$5 billion and, if passed, would certainly ensure the funds would be retained in a very robust financial situation. It would help us address the fact there are 85,000 workers every single week who are losing their unemployment compensation funds. As a result of losing their compensation funds,

they are hard pressed to pay for their mortgage, to continue to put food on the table, to pay for their utilities, the downpayment on their automobiles, and to continue to try to even be able to survive.

Real Americans are hurting in many parts of the country, and it doesn't have to be this way. The Senator from Washington has tried to have this issue addressed in the Senate some 14 times over the period of the last 18 months. She was only once successful, and that was in February of this last year when a vote that was taken in the Senate showed 58 Members of the Senate agreed with the Senator's position. We have a lot of close votes around here; some are 50-49, and some are 51-49. But when we have a vote that is 58-39, that demonstrates a strong bipartisan desire by the Members of this body to try to address the situation.

It isn't only the Members of this body. There was another vote in the House of Representatives which was 227-179 for a similar proposal to provide help and assistance to those who are unemployed, who have worked hard and paid into the fund. When the unemployment compensation fund was established, the very purpose of the unemployment compensation fund was to provide in these kinds of circumstances.

There are those who say we have seen and are seeing some significant changes in our economy and, therefore, this legislation is not necessary. Let me come back one more moment to address our procedural issue.

Last week, on Thursday evening, when it finally became possible after the long week for the Senate to consider the Cantwell amendment on the unemployment compensation fund, we finally had that matter before the Senate. Our Republican leadership rushed to move off the JOBS bill and move into morning business where we have been for the last several days because they didn't want to address the issue of unemployment compensation. Then we find the situation where the majority leader files cloture because the Republican leadership does not want to permit the Senate to vote on this kind of help and assistance for workers—basically middle-income families—to provide for themselves and their families, even though a broad majority of Republicans and Democrats favor it. They so fear, evidently, taking a vote on the issue of unemployment compensation that they say let us close out this amendment, prohibit Senator CANTWELL from getting a vote, prohibit the Senate from voting up or down, let's end all debate on the underlying bill and cut off any future amendments as well, because under the order they will have to follow the cloture provisions because we do not want to risk having the Members of this body vote yea or nay on the issue of unemployment compensation.

We are getting used to that by the leadership here. We see that similar

technique followed when it comes to overtime, although with the persistence of my friend and colleague Senator HARKIN, we were able to get an overtime vote. We saw an overwhelming majority of the Members of this body send a very clear message to the Bush administration to keep their hands off overtime payments for American workers.

We have been trying to get an increase in the minimum wage for some 7 years, and we have been denied the opportunity to get an up-or-down vote and let the Senate speak its will. Clearly, there is a majority in this body who understand it has been 7 years since we provided an increase in the minimum wage. And certainly now is the time when so many of those proud men and women are working on the bottom rung, but, nonetheless, working and working hard—men and women, primarily women, women who have children, and men and women of color who want to be able to provide for their families, and this institution denies them an opportunity to get an up-or-down vote on minimum wage. They tried to ensure that we would not have to vote on unemployment compensation, then deny the Senate the opportunity to get a vote on the increase in the minimum wage, try to avoid a vote on overtime—all the issues that affect the economic conditions for working families and middle-income families in this country.

As I have said many times, I don't know what these families have done to this administration or to the Republican Party that they should declare war upon them, but that is the result of their policies.

I thought I would take a few moments of this time to review where we are in terms of the state of our economy because there may be those who believe because there has been an increase in the total number of jobs created, even though 40 percent of those created in the last report period of last week are basically low-income jobs. In the group announced in the earlier quarter, there was virtually no manufacturing jobs. These was the increase in low-wage jobs and the increase in the part-time jobs but not the kind of real growth which this country is familiar with when we come out of a recovery, which means good jobs, good benefits, good hope for the future, and a sense of hope for those workers and workers' families.

These are April figures and do not include the latest of the May figures. In January of 2001, we had 6 million Americans who were unemployed. Now we have 8.2 million, 2.2 million more that were unemployed than we had 2 years ago.

This is one of the most important charts because this shows the long-term employment is nearly triple. Those are the number of workers who have been unemployed for more than 26 weeks. These are record numbers from recent history of 20 years; 20 years

since we have had this number of unemployed workers looking for jobs for longer than 26 weeks. Therefore, it reflects the fact we have many workers out there looking for jobs; they want to work and they are not able to find the jobs.

That is understandable when we have 8.2 million unemployed Americans yet we have only 2.9 million job openings, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. We have all these Americans looking for these jobs.

I ask consent that I be allowed to speak as long as I desire to speak.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. So we have 8.2 million unemployed Americans looking for these job openings. Clearly, they are not going to be able to squeeze into that funnel. It will mean many millions are going to continue to be unemployed.

That is what the Cantwell amendment addresses, those unemployed Americans who paid into that fund are losing their unemployment insurance, at the rate of over 85,000 a week.

The next chart is interesting because it shows the growth in the last 3 years. This represents March of this year, and it goes back to March of 2001 where we had 3.3 million Americans with part-time jobs who were looking for full-time employment. That was in March of 2001 at the start of this administration. Now that is up to 4.6 million Americans in part-time jobs who want to have a full-time job.

That is a great leap in terms of the unemployment numbers recently, the great numbers of those have been in the part-time jobs. As we know with part-time jobs, more often than not they do not get the health insurance, they are not given the overtime pay. Obviously, they are denied pensions and they are denied other protections which many full-time workers receive.

Americans want to work, they will work, but they are not given the opportunity to work in our economy, which gets back again to the Cantwell amendment. If that is the circumstance, why aren't we willing to extend the unemployment compensation fund when we know the unemployment compensation fund is in surplus?

The next chart indicates clearly that 40 percent of the jobs that are being created are in the low-wage and low-paying industries. This is what has happened in recent times. Even with the increase in the total numbers of jobs, these are basically low-paying jobs and part-time jobs. Only a handful of those in the last employment figures would be manufacturing.

The next chart shows 43 States still have higher unemployment than when the recession began. With the exception of the 6 States in yellow, 43 States still have higher unemployment than when the recession began, which comes back to the basic rationale for the Cantwell amendment.

We still have significant unemployment in great parts of this country of ours. People just cannot find other work. If that is the condition—and it is the condition because this is the Bureau of Labor Statistics figures—then we have to ask ourselves, Why are we cutting off and have ended effectively providing help and assistance with unemployment compensation? It does not have to be this way.

This chart is very instructive because it shows what a different administration did when we had economic challenges. This is in the early 1990s, coming out of the recession of the early 1990s. Under President Clinton, we saw the spiking of 2.9 million jobs. It took the spiking of up to 2.9 million before the administration terminated the extended unemployment compensation funds. They were facing significant unemployment. With Presidential leadership and with the support of a Democrat House and Senate—that is true; because we did not get a single Republican vote in the Senate or in the House of Representatives—President Clinton put that into effect. We had the longest period of economic growth, price stability and job expansion than we have had in the last century. Finally, they cut off the unemployment compensation after it reached 2.9 million.

We have 2 million still unemployed and this administration has said, No way, to those workers and denied them unemployment compensation.

This chart rebuts modern thinking about who is now suffering from the unemployment and who is not. The green line represents less than a high school degree and the red line signifies college graduate. It has been the belief that with more education, there is a greater and greater opportunity to get a job. Right? Wrong. It does not necessarily follow. It can follow but it does not necessarily follow.

Over the period of the last year, we find those with college degrees are increasingly those who are affected with unemployment, even more so than those with less than a high school degree which, effectively, remains flat.

What is happening is higher unemployment is moving into the middle income. This is going to college graduates—not those who just completed 1 year but those who completed college. The red line on the chart indicates they are the ones now who have college degrees. Yet they are increasingly unemployed.

I bring back to the Senate this very important chart because it very clearly shows what is happening out there in Main Street America to the middle-income working families in this country.

Over the period of the last 5 years, what we have seen—and we are looking now from 2000 to 2004—in the purchasing power of middle-income families is their income has gone down 2 percent. But the prices for their homes or rentals have gone up 17.8 percent; health care, 50 percent; tuition for

their children, 35 percent; and utilities, 15 percent. You talk about the middle income having challenges holding on to their economic security, this is what is happening to them. Their income, in terms of purchasing power, has effectively been stable, but the costs which they have had to pay in health insurance, tuition, utilities, and home prices, let alone what has been happening in terms of their local taxes, have been going up, and they have been feeling the squeeze.

Can you imagine families with these kinds of obligations and suddenly they do not have any income at all. The only lifeline they have is the unemployment compensation. They have paid into it, and they wonder if they are going to get it. The unemployment fund is in surplus, and the Republican leadership says: No, we are not going to let you have a vote.

Finally, we should understand this very clearly about what has been happening on Wall Street. With the Wall Street recovery, the corporate profits have gone up in the last 3 years by some 37.5 percent. Yet the change in workers' wages, as this chart shows, is 1.5 percent; basically the same figures we had before.

So this is what is happening. There are those who are doing very well, and there are those who are able to go through this period of time and have a great deal of financial security. But not middle-income working families; they have not been able to do so. And this institution is not helping them. We are not helping them with any kind of increase in the minimum wage. We do not help them with the unemployment compensation. We do not help them, although we did have a positive vote. The administration certainly did not help them on the issue of overtime. We have left out 9 million Americans when it comes to pensions, which leads me into another issue in terms of health care coverage, which is another issue for us to consider.

What the Senator from Washington is attempting to do is to provide at least some temporary relief until the economy gets strong for those millions of Americans who are trying to make it, who worked hard and paid into the unemployment compensation fund so they will be able to meet the most basic and fundamental needs of their families.

Without this relief, 85,000 American workers a week are losing their unemployment compensation. Surely we can do something about it. We have a surplus fund of in excess of \$15 billion. So I would hope we would cease the obstruction of the Cantwell amendment and permit us to have a vote on the Cantwell amendment. We have had a clear majority of this body that wants to vote in favor of it. Yet we are being obstructed from being able to do that, as we have been obstructed by the Republican majority on the issue of the increase in the minimum wage.

MEDICARE AND THE UNINSURED

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, for many of us, this is “cover the uninsured week,” but, for the administration, a better title would be “ignore the uninsured week.” Since the day it took office, this administration has ignored the worsening health care crisis that jeopardizes more and more families. Costs are out of control. The number of the uninsured is soaring. No family can be sure that the insurance that protects them today will be there for them tomorrow. And the Bush administration remains frozen in the ice of its own indifference.

The number of people without insurance has grown by four million since President Bush took office—and he has done nothing. Health insurance premiums have skyrocketed by 43 percent—and he has done nothing. Prescription drug costs have exploded by 45 percent—and he has done nothing.

Every day, employers shift more costs to employers or cancel coverage altogether. Every day more families are forced into bankruptcy because of high medical bills. And President Bush does nothing.

Soaring health costs and declining insurance coverage harms the poor, but they are protected to some extent by Medicaid. It is the hardworking middle class who are victimized the most. More than 80 percent of the uninsured are in working families. Fourteen million have incomes of more than \$50,000 a year. Seven million have incomes of more than \$75,000 a year. No family is more than one pink slip or one employer decision away from being uninsured.

That is wrong. You and I know it is wrong. And the American people know it is wrong. But President Bush refuses to do anything about it.

The President has read the polls showing that the American people are concerned about health care, so he pretends that he cares. As in so many areas, he talks the talk, but he doesn't walk the walk. He has done nothing. The steps he has proposed don't even deserve to be called tokenism. They actually take us in the wrong direction. They would be laughable, except that the health care crisis is no laughing matter for millions of American families.

The President touts new tax breaks for the healthy and wealthy—as if the wealthy haven't already benefitted far too much from this administration's policies. The administration calls for health savings accounts—but for millions of Americans who need health care the most, the result will be thousands of dollars in higher premiums, not savings.

The administration claims to offer refundable tax credits to help the low-income uninsured buy insurance. But those credits are inadequate to buy real coverage. Far from helping the uninsured, they would actually cause millions more to lose the good employer coverage they now enjoy. They are