

make progress on the matters I have outlined here today and that the obstruction that has stalled our further progress will not be continued. Let us move forward together in the best interest of the American people. Any Senator can prevent action on an item in these waning days of the session. There is no secret or magic about that. The question for Senators this month is whether they are willing to put aside minor differences and partisan agendas to join with us in making progress and moving forward.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my statement, the Senator from Colorado be recognized.

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

IRAQ

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I listened with interest to my friend from Kentucky comment about my statement on Iraq and the importance of disengagement with the withdrawal of American troops. I don't intend to restate my positions on the war this afternoon. I came to the floor to address another issue. But I will point out that one of the best votes I have cast in the Senate was in opposition to the resolution, supported by the Senator from Kentucky, that took us into Iraq, where American forces have been fighting for a longer time than all of World War II and where we see the continued loss of American lives—some 37 American lives lost last month—and billions in taxpayer dollars flooding into the sands of Iraq. Still, there is not the reconciliation by the Iraqi political leadership to develop some kind of Government that could be the basis for independence in the future. As our brave men and women are fighting gallantly and with great valor there, they are entitled to a policy that is worthy of their valor. Today they are effectively being held hostage by Iraqi politicians who refuse to negotiate among themselves and form a government. That might be satisfactory to the Senator from Kentucky but not to the

Senator from Massachusetts. Evidently, the Senator from Kentucky wants to give a blank check to the Iraqi politicians: Continue your squabbles over there, while we continue to see the loss of American lives and blood.

Not the Senator from Massachusetts. They have had their time. What is going to convince the Iraqi politicians we are serious? What will send the message is when we demonstrate that we are starting to withdraw American troops. Then they are going to make political judgments for their survival.

But not today. If the Senator from Kentucky wants to continue an open-ended commitment with American lives and American treasure, that is his position. It is not mine. I don't think that is where the American people are.

How long is it going to take for the Iraqi politicians to get together? They are not doing it now. They didn't do it yesterday. They don't appear to be willing to do it tomorrow, even though we have had assurances from the administration that success was around the corner.

This is a matter of enormous importance and consequence. We will continue the debate. That is why I am a strong supporter of what our leader pointed out earlier today, talking about a proposal that has been put forward in terms of what is called bridge funding.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I rise to take a few moments to talk about the state of our economy. I do so because during the break, I had the opportunity to talk with a lot of people in my own State of Massachusetts. Our State is not greatly different from many other States, certainly in the northeastern and central part of the Nation, older industrial States. The conclusion of working families and the middle class is pretty consistent across the country, that the state of our economy has given working families a good deal of fear.

Let me review quickly what our current situation is. The vast majority of Americans are anxious about the economy. This is from the latest poll in November of 2007: 78 percent say the economy is getting worse, the most negative outlook in the past 16 years. We have to ask ourselves: Is this a Democratic, Independent or Republican view? Let's look across the spectrum: 89 percent of Democrats feel that way, and these are representatives of working families; Independents are 78 percent. Even among Republicans, 65 percent believe the economy is getting worse.

This sense of anxiety about a growing economy has been there for some time. Look where it was in January of 2001. Fifty-six percent of Americans were concerned about the economy. Now look at November of 2007. It has gone from 56 percent to 78 percent who are concerned about the economy.

Let's look at how working families view the future for the next generation, their children. Working families feel insecure about their children's economic future. This is a current assessment of how working families view what is going to happen to their children: 23 percent believe their children will be better off than they are today; 30 percent believe their children will have the same future as they have; and 42 percent believe their children will be worse off than today. This is a defining aspect of what our country is about. It is about the American dream. It is about hope and opportunity, not only for themselves but for their children and their children's children. When you lose that hope, you begin to lose working families' views about the American dream.

This chart shows an explanation of why this has happened. We are growing further apart in terms of wages and productivity for middle-income families. From 1947 to 1962, as we came out of World War II, as productivity increased, wages increased, and the economy went along together, all of the different quintiles of the American economy went along together. We all grew together. There was a sense of optimism and hope because we had a shared economy, a shared future. But look at what has happened in terms of real wages and productivity. Productivity has escalated 205 percent. Wages have effectively gone up about 5 percent over the last 7 years in terms of real dollars and the rest of that productivity has gone to the wealthiest individuals.

One of the principle reasons is because wages have effectively remained stagnant. We have seen what has happened to the price of gasoline. It is up 66 percent. Health care is up 38 percent. Education is up 43 percent. Home ownership is up nearly 40 percent, and effectively wages are stagnant at 5 percent. These are the things that families are concerned about, how they are going to get to work. How they are going to be able to afford health care, to send their children to school? Are they going to have a home?

This is what all of us have seen in many of the colder regions of the country. As the temperature drops, home heating oil prices have gone through the roof: \$1.83 a gallon in 2001; in 2007, \$3.29. It has gone up 33 percent in real terms since last year. So homes have gotten more expensive. Education is more expensive. Fuel is more expensive. Health care is more expensive. Heating oil is more expensive. This has all contributed to the growth of insecurity.

The price of food has risen faster than the rate of inflation. Whether it is a pound of beef or whether it is eggs, prices are rising up to 50 percent faster than the rate of inflation. Even milk is higher than the rate of inflation.

All of this has been happening while working families have been working longer and harder than those in any other industrial nation of the world.

Here, as shown on this chart, we have nearly 40 million Americans—28 percent of the American workforce—who work more than 40 hours a week. Also, 1 in 10 workers works more than 50 hours a week. So almost 30 percent work more than 40 hours a week. Mr. President, 7.9 million Americans are working two or more jobs. American working hours are the second highest of any of the developed countries.

This chart is a good indicator. Americans' work has increased more than any other industrialized country of the world. Here it is: 20 percent from 1970 to 2002. Here, as shown on this chart, is the United States. Workers are working longer. They are working harder. Many of them are getting two jobs. And the essential elements that are necessary for their livelihood have far exceeded their wages and, therefore, they find increasing apprehension about their own future and about the future of their country.

This chart is an indicator about where we are in terms of savings. Credit card debt has exploded, bringing cash available for an average family down to \$1,600. The credit card debt has gone absolutely up through the roof. This chart shows that Americans now owe \$900 billion in credit card debt. This is the escalation: People are borrowing this money, relying more and more on the credit card; and the fees that are being charged are extraordinary. But Americans will have to pay them because they cannot see any other way.

This chart is an indicator of where the savings have been going over the period of the last 40 years. The red line indicates that the savings have gone right down. We are talking about working families with virtually no savings. There is an extraordinary escalation in terms of the cost, and all of this is happening at the same time.

This chart shows that millions of American families are facing losing their homes. Foreclosures are rising dramatically—177 percent from 2005. Pick up any newspaper in the country today and you will see that kind of pressure that is on working families. With all the apprehension they have, can they afford the mortgage, particularly at this time of the year, Christmas? Can they afford the mortgage? And can they afford to try to celebrate Christmas with their children?

These are the mortgage woes that are creating a "subprime" Christmas for consumers in stores. This is the Hariman family who normally spends about \$500 on holiday gifts. This season they have a wrenching choice: celebrate Christmas or keep their home out of foreclosure. Many families have gone into that situation.

There is an increasing number of bankruptcies. This chart shows the escalation now in terms of the number of bankruptcies that are taking place among working families in this country—escalating, escalating, escalating. As shown on this chart, this is by quarters. This is 2007: the first quarter, the

second quarter, the third quarter—and it is continuing to escalate and grow and grow. Houses are being lost. Bankruptcies are taking place.

This is one of the very distressing charts. This couple and child represent a middle-class family, middle-income family from the last generation, which would be 40 years ago. This is the current situation for the last generation's children.

You will see that 19 percent rise to the top of the economic ladder; 17 percent fall to the bottom. Look what the total is: 36 percent of the children of middle-income families rose somewhat, and 41 percent of the children fell—fell slightly or fell to the bottom. These are the children of middle-income families, the backbone of this country, our society, and this is what has happened to them. These are the latest figures, and families know that.

It is bad enough for the average family, but it has been particularly damaging in terms of a number of the minority groups. In this case, African Americans born to middle-class parents have fallen out of the middle class. In the last 20 years, in middle-income families, 69 percent of the children—effectively 70 percent—have fallen into lower economic standing. This has probably been true in terms of other minority groups as well.

We are growing farther and farther apart, increasing inequality, increasing uncertainty, at a time when the safety nets are effectively disappearing—disappearing in terms of pensions, disappearing in terms of health care costs, disappearing in terms of unemployment compensation. All of those safety nets have been put in tatters at a time when working families and their children are in the greatest need.

This chart shows the number of uninsured Americans. We are familiar with the figures. They are used daily. Now the number is close to 47 million. This is even in spite of the fact that the CHIP program was implemented during this period of time and has actually provided health care for up to 7 million children.

This chart is interesting because we have too many working Americans lacking insurance. Look at this: More than 80 million adults and children—1 out of every 3 nonelderly individuals—have spent some part of the last 2 years without health insurance. Without insurance: 80 million—80 million in a country of 300 million people. So 80 million people have spent some time over the last 2 years without health insurance. And 85 percent of them were working adults. These are working men and women. These are men and women who are working, in many instances, two jobs—working longer and harder than at any other time in the history of our country, and they are still facing this situation.

This chart shows that half of American workers do not have any form of retirement savings at work. They effectively have no pension savings. That is

half of all the workers in this country. It is a rather important shift and change in recent times. Now it is going in the absolutely wrong direction. Mr. President, 4 million fewer Americans have pensions than 7 years ago. In 2000, 46 million workers had one. Now it is 42 million workers, and these numbers are going right on down. They are not going in the right direction. They are going in the wrong direction.

This chart is another way of saying that only one in five workers now has a defined benefit pension which will give the workers some assurance there will be benefits there. Others have the 401(k)s that may be going up or may be going down, and we have seen a period where they were going down, and they have lost their security in terms of their future. That has been happening over the period of the last 16 years, where increasing numbers have lost their security.

American workers lack access to the needed paid sick days. What is happening in the middle class is there are increasing numbers of children who need focus and attention because two members of the family are working and their child is sick. Also, because parents are living longer, working families have more responsibilities to provide care for needy members of their family. But only 48 percent have paid sick days, and 70 percent do not have paid days to care for sick children. So it is a very small number of parents who have that. They are caught in the situation where they have a sick child, and they let the sick child go to school, where the child gets sicker and, chances are, contaminates other children as well.

Unemployment has risen under President Bush and his failed economic policies. Unemployment has increased by 1.2 million people from January 2001 to October 2007. But long-term unemployment has gone up 59 percent. This is long-term employment. These are people who have lost their jobs and are unable to get a job. They effectively were participants in the job market. This figure is unusually high and it's been high for an unusually long period of time.

There are a final few points I want to mention. The majority of the unemployed workers do not receive benefits. We used to think if you were unemployed, you were going to get unemployment insurance. Not anymore. Sixty-four percent of unemployed workers receive nothing at all from unemployment insurance. For those who do now collect benefits, they are often inadequate. Average unemployment insurance checks are down to 28 percent of income. This is an antiquated system. Now workers who actually pay into it are ineligible to get it for a variety of different kinds of technical reasons. We are trying to work with the Finance Committee, with Senator BAUCUS and others to address this issue. These are workers who have paid

in or are otherwise eligible for unemployment compensation and are unable to collect it.

Effectively, as shown, this is the inadequacy in terms of childcare. Only 14 percent of eligible children have access to Government-assisted childcare.

These charts give you some idea why the working families of America have such apprehension in terms of the future and in terms of their own lives. We need the programs to be able to deal with this situation. We have a number of recommendations, and I will mention them very quickly this afternoon and will put in additional kinds of information.

First, we need to safeguard working families from the turbulence of the modern economy by providing stronger and better support for families in crisis. Our country is going through profound economic shifts, and too many workers are losing their jobs in the wake of these changes.

I have introduced bipartisan legislation, the Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act, to make sure those who have worked hard and paid into the system get the benefits they deserve. I hope we will see progress on the bill soon so that much more that needs to be done will be done to help Americans who are struggling to find a job.

We also need an aggressive agenda to help families facing a health care crisis. We must make more progress toward a universal, comprehensive program that is going to be there and be available and accessible to all Americans.

In the meantime, we can follow the examples of my own State, Massachusetts, which has taken the lead in providing our residents access to quality health care. It is absolutely essential, as these charts pointed out, that we address this problem.

Strengthening the safety net alone is not enough. We need to redouble our efforts to restore economic opportunity for families. Americans are working harder than ever, and they need the additional kinds of training. In my State now we have 145,000 unemployed. We have 75,000 job openings. They are good jobs. Yet, we have seen a continuing reduction in terms of training programs. Those people could get the jobs and be taxpayers and be committed and productive members of society. But we have seen over the period of the recent years, including with this last budget request, a continued reduction in terms of training programs by this administration.

We know workers have to have a continuing, ongoing upgrading of their skills in order to be able to deal with these jobs. I think we need labor law reforms, such as the Employee Free Choice Act, to protect the right to organize so employees can stand up and fight for what is fair.

I think we need to address again the earned income tax credit to help those at the bottom of the economic ladder

who have worked hard and played by the rules. We have to continue, I think, the progress we have made in the increase in the minimum wage so we do not fall back in terms of providing working families with a decent income.

The late Barbara Jordan once said:

What the [American] people want is very simple. They want an America as good as its promise.

The promise of America is that it is truly a land of opportunity, where every working family can share in the Nation's prosperity, where we all rise together, and we can be confident that our children have a bright future. For decades we enjoyed that vision of shared prosperity. I am confident we can make that promise a reality for American families again. We owe it to all the workers who have seen their bills go up, while their paychecks go down. We owe it to all the parents who cannot sleep at night because they are worried about their children's future. We owe it to all the families who are struggling and need a reason to celebrate this holiday season. We owe the American people our best efforts, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the weeks and months ahead to put working families back on track.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 3688

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks in morning business for about 15 minutes, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 480, H.R. 3688, the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement; that the statutory time be reduced to 10 hours, equally divided as provided for under the statute; that when the Senate resumes the measure on Tuesday, December 4, there be 90 minutes remaining for debate equally divided; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the measure be set aside until 2:15 p.m. and, without further intervening action or debate, the Senate proceed to vote on passage of H.R. 3688 at 2:15 p.m. on Tuesday.

This unanimous consent agreement has been cleared by both sides.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to speak in connection with the 2007 farm bill which was being debated on the floor of the Senate over the last several weeks prior to the time of Thanksgiving. As I rise to speak about the farm bill, I wish to say thank you to my colleague and good friend from Massachusetts, Senator KENNEDY, for again bringing to the attention of the American public the importance of what is happening economically across the spectrum of America today, which

is that there is a great sense of concern and instability and nervousness among the American public about what is happening in their own economic lives and whether their children will have access to higher education, whether they will be able to afford health care and health care insurance, whether gas prices are going to essentially force them to not be able to afford the essentials of life.

I think within all of that, one of the things Senator KENNEDY so eloquently speaks to is this covenant of America, that somehow we are all here as Americans in a common mission to try to create a better world for our children and for our grandchildren and for the rest of humanity. The one thing we cannot afford to do is to allow that covenant to be broken. We in this Chamber of the U.S. Senate, working in a bipartisan way, have an obligation to ensure that the covenant of America is something we honor, something we give dignity to in our efforts through our work.

As part of that work, one of the things I think is very critical is that we not forget those parts of America which, in many ways, have been the forgotten America, and those are the communities of rural America. Those are communities like the towns and the counties where I come from and the county of Conejos County, which is one of the poorest counties in the United States of America, which, no matter how well the rest of America is doing, seems to be struggling on the vine.

So it is important for us in the Senate, in the weeks and days ahead, to do everything we can to make sure we pass the farm bill because it is a farm bill that is good for America. It is a farm bill that is good for nutrition. As my good friend KENT CONRAD and my good friend Senator HARKIN have kept reminding the people of America, 67 percent of the bill we are working on is for nutrition. That aspect of our legislation is invented to provide assistance to those who are most in need. So I am hopeful that as we move forward this week and next week, we as the Senate will come together on a bipartisan basis to move forward with a farm bill that is so essential to the food security of the Nation.

I wish to thank Chairman HARKIN and Senator CHAMBLISS for their hard work on this farm bill we have put so much time on for the last 2½ years. I also thank Chairman BAUCUS and Ranking Member GRASSLEY for their work on the Finance Committee because their contribution to this farm bill has been so essential to get us to a point where we have a forward-thinking and balanced bill on the floor. I know that as I speak this afternoon, there are negotiations underway with respect to whether we can narrow the number of amendments to be considered on the floor so that we can move forward to consideration and hopefully final passage of this bill.

A lot of folks in this country are looking to us in the Senate this week