

People are feeling squeezed. As the distinguished Presiding Officer knows, people are feeling squeezed on all sides in their lives. Too many people are seeing their wages go down, if they have a job. They see their health care costs go up, their gas prices go up, their health care costs go up—all the costs—the costs of college going up.

One by one, we are addressing those issues. We are focused on making change happen, to help families working hard every day who want to make sure the American dream is there for their kids and for their grandkids, who love this country. They are people who love this country and say: Hey, what about us? Is anybody paying attention to us? The majority of Americans who are working hard every single day, following the rules, who love their family, love their faith, and want to know somebody is paying attention to their needs and their lives and their desire to have that American dream and to have the American way of life. So we understand that.

I am proud to be part of the majority that has made a commitment to address those things—whether it is bringing down the cost of college, raising wages, being able to address the costs of gas and energy; whether it is addressing food and nutrition and conservation and alternative fuels or the mortgage crisis.

The common theme for us is: Making change happen for middle-class Americans and those who love our country and want us to help them be able to keep that American dream, by having the rules be fair and having it make sense for them in this country.

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, in a moment, I am going to offer a unanimous consent request to pass H.R. 4341, which is a 3-month extension of something called the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act. We call it TAA.

But first I wish to speak for a moment about this program, because when we talk about families, when we talk about middle-class families—people who love this country, who play by the rules every day, and want to know that they can take care of their kids and have a job and a home and all those things we want for our children—we have a group of people in this country who, through no fault of their own, have found themselves losing their job because of this global economy we have—something called trade, jobs being shipped offshore.

Certainly, I support trade. We all support trade. But I want to export our products, not our jobs. Back when the free trade laws were passed, NAFTA and others, there was a commitment made by the Federal Government to help those who are caught in the middle, who lost their job because of trade policy.

Their job goes away, and the Federal Government is the one passing these

trade laws. So the Federal Government said: OK, we are going to help people transition to new jobs, to be able to get the help, the support they need—some help for health care in the short run and be able to go back to college, go to community college, go to trade school, whatever they want to do to be able to transition, to be able to keep their standard of living, and, again, to keep their way of life.

We are in a situation right now where the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program will expire at the end of this year, and we have been pushing very hard for a simple 3-month extension. The House sent to us a simple 3-month extension of the current law until we can revise and update the law.

Now, I have to also say, I am very pleased, as a member of the Finance Committee, to be working with our chairman, to have joined him in introducing a very important bill to improve trade adjustment assistance, to be able to expand what we can do to more adequately meet the needs of workers and families and communities and small businesses that are impacted by unfair trade situations or the loss of jobs through trade.

But, right now, we have an immediate situation, an immediate situation going on that will affect thousands—tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands—of Americans across the country if this law expires. We have been doing everything possible to be able to simply get a 3-month extension. We did that once back in September—a 3-month extension. We are asking for another 3-month extension so we can pass this broader, more up-to-date law that will help more people.

When I think about this issue, it is something that is shocking to me, to think we would even have to be struggling with our Republican colleagues about a 3-month extension. I think about Greenville, MI, on the west side of Michigan, a town of about 8,000 people, who saw their Electrolux plant—they made refrigerators—that employed 2,700 people—they did a great job; they worked in three shifts; they were making a profit—but the company decided they could make a bigger profit if they moved to Mexico.

After a lot of discussion with the State, myself, and others in the Federal Government—how could we help them be able to stay—they said: Do you know what. You can't compete with \$1.57 an hour and no health benefits, no pension benefits in Mexico. So they left.

The people in Greenville, MI, have been counting on the Federal Government to keep its promise through trade adjustment assistance, to be able to help them pick themselves up and continue their lives.

This is not some theoretical debate. I know these people. I know people in communities all across Michigan who have been told: Gee, we are sorry this current race to the bottom in trade, where you go to the lowest wage

around the world, is affecting you. We are sorry about this, but at least there is the thing called TAA, trade adjustment assistance, that can help you.

Well, right now this is running out. It may not be there for new people who find themselves in a situation similar to the folks in Greenville. That is outrageous. When we think about the obstruction that has gone on, on this floor over and over and over again, the 62 different filibusters, the obstructions, the objections that have gone on, you would think, a few days before Christmas, the holidays—a time of charity and good will—we could come together, that our colleagues would join with us and simply allow a current law to continue for 3 months—just 3 months. That is it; just 3 months.

Unfortunately, our Republican colleagues have held this issue hostage over a totally unrelated issue. They have wanted to tie this to a dispute regarding the FAA. Certainly, the FAA is important, but they want to tie it to a dispute there and are blocking our efforts to simply move forward on a 3-month extension of something that directly helps working people in this country—families, communities. It helps families be able to stay intact, be able to move into this new economy, new world that everybody is talking about that involves a different kind of trade policy.

Our leader has offered that we will deal with trade adjustment assistance, a 3-month extension, but also address the unrelated Republican FAA proposal on its own, that both would be dealt with but dealt with separately. For some unknown reason, that was not acceptable. There has been a desire to tie them together and to object to proceeding on this very important effort to support families and to make sure nobody falls through the cracks come January 1.

That is the least we can do in the Senate. If this program expires, unemployed men and women all around America are going to be in a position to be denied the help they need to be able to continue on with their lives. Those who are currently involved in the program will be able to continue to receive help, but I can assure you, coming from a State in great transition right now, with thousands of people falling into that situation, where they need trade adjustment help, we have people who have been waiting and waiting and waiting and will find themselves in a situation on January 1 with no help.

This is not acceptable. This is absolutely not acceptable. It does not have to happen. There is absolutely no reason for this. We have a simple House bill in front of us—no secrets; very simple. Very simple: extend this critical program through Christmas, through New Year's. Get us into the new year so we can work out any other differences and let families be able to know we understand and we are not going to use unemployed men and

women, who are unemployed through no fault of their own—the plant picks up and goes to Mexico, goes to China, goes someplace else. This is not their fault. They want to work. They are great workers. They are going to continue to find a way to work. But to hold them as pawns at this time is shameful.

So, Mr. President, I am being told there is going to be a Republican objection. I received a note to that effect. I am told there is no one here who is able to object at this time. But due to the courtesies of the Senate, I will not ask, although I am very tempted, I have to tell you—but due to the courtesies involved in the Senate, and the rules of the Senate, I will not proceed to ask for unanimous consent because, in fact, I have received a notice that the Republicans will, in fact, be objecting one more time, one more time, one more time to our ability to support and help working men and women and their families for the next 3 months.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

EXTENDING AIP CONTRACT AUTHORITY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Congress is currently considering proposals to extend contract authority for the Airport Improvement Program, which is known as AIP. If lawmakers—that is us—are unable to reach an agreement and fail to pass legislation extending contract authority before Congress adjourns for the year—that will be in a few minutes—the funding for critical safety, security, and capacity projects at airports throughout the country will be delayed.

The omnibus does not contain any funding authority from the aviation trust to pay for airport grants. The short-term extension includes such funding authority for 6 months and has formula changes that allow the Department of Transportation to run the program with only half a year's funding. If the separate FAA extension isn't passed, the Department will not be able to make any grants to airports.

Lack of contract authority for the Airport Improvement Program grants would cause significant impact. Unless rectified through authorization, the program would lose a construction season for airports that have had to bid contracts early due to winter weather for work in the spring and summer.

Delaying these funds would be particularly hard on small airports that rely on this funding as the primary source of revenue for infrastructure projects and those airports in parts of

the country with short construction cycles.

Since Congress has been unable to pass a multiyear Federal Aviation Administration authorization bill, airports are urging Congress to pass legislation that will extend the authority through the end of March for a total of 6 months of funding.

Extending this contract authority through the end of March would provide airports with more than \$1.8 billion in AIP funds. Extending the AIP contract authority through the end of March will allow the FAA to fully fund the Letter of Intent Program, which provides funding for critical infrastructure projects at major commercial airports around the country.

It was my intention to ask unanimous consent to pass S. 2530, the Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act for 2007, which was introduced earlier. It is my understanding that there would be a Republican objection, so, sadly, I will withhold asking for that consent.

I am disappointed that this is not going to be able to go forward. There are many airports around the country, airports in Pennsylvania, and I am sure in Nevada and other parts of the country that, simply will be unable to do what they need to do for the people who are so dependent on them, especially these rural airports.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, another month has passed, and more American troops lost their lives overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is only right that we take time in the Senate to honor them.

Since last memorializing the names of our fallen troops on November 16, the Pentagon has announced the deaths of 39 troops. They lost their lives in Iraq and in Operation Enduring Freedom, which includes Afghanistan. They will not be forgotten. Today I submit their names into the RECORD:

PFC Juctin R. P. McDaniel, of Andover, NH
SGT Austin D. Pratt, of Cadet, MO
PVT Daren A. Smith, of Helena, MT
SFC Jonathan A. Lowery, of Houlton, ME
SSG Michael J. Gabel, of Crowley, LA
CPL Joshua C. Blaney, of Matthews, NC
SGT Samuel E. Kelsey, of Troup, TX
SPC Brynn J. Naylor, of Roswell, NM
CPO Mark T. Carter, of Fallbrook, CA
SSG Gregory L. Elam, of Columbus, GA
CPL Tanner J. O'Leary, of Eagle Butte, SD
CPL Johnathan A. Lahmann, of Richmond, IN

SPC Randy W. Pickering, of Bovey, MN
SGT Eric J. Hernandez, of Waldwick, NJ
PVT Dewayne L. White, of Country Club Hills, IL
CPT Adam P. Snyder, of Fort Pierce, FL
SGT Kyle Dayton, of El Dorado Hills, CA
SGT Blair W. Emery, of Lee, ME
SPC Matthew K. Reece, of Harrison, AR
SFC John J. Tobiason, of Bloomington, MN
CPL Allen C. Roberts, of Arcola, IL
PVT Isaac T. Cortes, of Bronx, NY
SPC Benjamin J. Garrison, of Houston, TX
SSG Jonathon L. Martin, of Bellevue, OH
SPC Melvin L. Henley, Jr., of Jackson, MS
SGT Alfred G. Paredes, Jr., of Las Vegas, NV

PFC Marius L. Ferrero, of Miami, FL
CPL Jason T. Lee, of Fruitport, MI
CPL Christopher J. Nelson, of Rochester, WA
2LT Peter H. Burks, of Dallas, TX
SSG Alejandro Ayala, of Riverside, CA
SGT Steven C. Ganczewski, of Niagara Falls, NY

SGT Mason L. Lewis, of Gloucester, VA
SGT Kenneth R. Booker, of Vevay, IN
2LT Stuart F. Liles, of Hot Springs, AR
SPC Ashley Sietsema, of Melrose Park, IL
CPT David A. Boris, of PA
SPC Adrian E. Hike, of Callender, IA
SGT Derek R. Banks, of Newport News, VA

We cannot forget these brave men and women and their sacrifice. These brave souls left behind parents and children, siblings, and friends; we want them to know the country pledges to preserve the memory of our lost soldiers, who paid the ultimate price, with the dignity they deserve.

FHA MODERNIZATION ACT

Mr. SUNUNU. Mr. President, last week, I was pleased to support passage of the FHA Modernization Act, S. 2338. This legislation will update the FHA program so that it once again is better able to provide many low-income and first-time homebuyers another option as they try to secure a mortgage for a new home or to refinance an existing mortgage under more affordable terms.

As some consumers experience credit tightening in the home mortgage and other financial markets, a byproduct of issues in the subprime mortgage market, the availability of stable financing alternatives is critically important to reducing the negative effects of the current market turmoil.

While the FHA Modernization Act is not a silver bullet, it represents a responsible step the federal government can take to benefit thousands of borrowers around the country.

Additionally, in the last several days Congress passed a measure, which I cosponsored, that encourages homeowners and their lenders to work out alternative payment plans that prevent individuals from losing their homes. The Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act, H.R. 3648, will protect taxpayers from an IRS tax bill in the event they have a portion of their mortgage debt forgiven. Under current law, homeowners entering foreclosure or refinancing their mortgage at a lower loan value due to a drop in housing prices, face an unfair and unwarranted tax. The last thing someone struggling to stay in their home needs is a huge tax obligation on income that they never saw. I expect the President to sign this legislation into law in the coming days.

In addition to the legislation recently advanced by Congress, the Federal Reserve proposed a rule this week that would prohibit lenders from making so-called "no documentation" loans where a borrower's income or assets are not verified; prohibit lenders from engaging "in a pattern or practice" of lending without considering a borrower's ability to repay a loan; restrict prepayment penalties on certain