

system. But also, for the good of the auto industry in the United States, for the good of those workers, let's not doom them to failure. Let's demand, whatever we do, that they go into a period of fundamental restructuring—the type of fundamental restructuring that is necessary, for instance, in a bankruptcy. It does not have to be done in the context of an actual bankruptcy. Many people say that would kill auto sales; that it is not practical, they cannot survive that.

I do not particularly agree with that argument, but that same fundamental restructuring can be done in other ways without that bankruptcy title looming over the companies' heads. That is what they need to survive. That is what those workers need to keep their jobs. Let's not pass this auto industry bailout and deny them the possibility of a survivable and brighter future.

These remarks apply equally to not only the Democratic leader's proposal, under which the \$25 billion would come directly out of the TARP program, but my remarks and my concerns are fundamental. They apply equally to President Bush's proposal, which is essentially the same, simply taking the money out of a different pot, simply using the \$25 billion of low-interest loans we have already authorized, against my objections, to do the same thing.

Again, my concerns are not superficial—use this pot of money and not that pot—my concerns are much more fundamental. They go to the center of the future of our economy. But they also go to the core of what is needed for the U.S. auto industry to remain competitive, to become more competitive, and to save those American jobs.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

COMMUNICATION FROM THE HONORABLE BARACK OBAMA

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair lays a communication before the Senate.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, November 18, 2008.

Hon. RICHARD CHENEY,
Vice President of the United States of America,
President of the U.S. Senate, U.S. Capitol,
Washington, DC.

DEAR VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY, PRESIDENT OF THE U.S. SENATE: This letter is to inform you that I resigned from the United States Senate, effective November 16, 2008, in order to prepare for my duties as President of the United States.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA,
U.S. Senator.

ORDER FOR RECESS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess today from 2:30 until 4 to allow Senators to attend today's briefing with Secretary Gates, Secretary Rice, and the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

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

WORKING TOGETHER

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, that was quite a letter. I must say, to be here for this historic moment, my heart is racing. We heard the letter from the President-elect resigning from the Senate. This is, indeed, a moment of passage in the Senate and for the country. By Senator Obama's resignation from the duty and responsibility the people of Illinois gave him, it is one more step for him to pick up the responsibilities of the Presidency of the United States. I will cherish this moment because it will be a historic moment, from "We need change" and "Yes, we can" on the long campaign trail to election night, to a charismatic speech calling us to act like an American community, not only a country of which we are proud, a nation we hold dear, but an American community. That is the Obama message which I hope will be the Obama effect. As our President-elect lays down these duties and takes up others, we need to realize and respond to his call and a new American mandate. Because on November 4, we who hold Federal office received a new American mandate to change the tone, to change the direction, to change the priorities, and to be able to move on and get our economy rolling and bring our troops back home and restore our national honor in the world.

Sign me up. Sign me up as an enthusiastic member of this effort. I accept that mandate. I accept it. I call upon all my colleagues to do the same, to embrace the message Senator Obama has set, not only in terms of a dynamic, robust agenda but how we will work with each other. I thought it was grand that he sat down with our colleague from Arizona, Senator McCain, to talk about how they could work together, how they could find that common ground, how we could find that sensible center between what we want to do and what we can afford to do. That is the tone Obama set with McCain. Let's set it now with Reid and McConnell. Let's try to find common ground, that sensible center, pragmatic, affordable solutions we can do now. We have a window. We have a time. As President-elect Obama said: This is our time. Our time doesn't begin January 20. Our time doesn't begin January 6. This is our time now to lay the groundwork for the transition of power, to work together. I ask us now, as we look at the stimulus

package, as we look at solutions for our manufacturing area, how to extend the safety net for those people who are already hurting: Let's do that.

Right now, once again, back to business as usual, entangled in a parliamentary quagmire, digging in our heels, based on rigid ideology. That is not what the people said on November 4. They said they wanted change, and they want it now. Let it begin with us, civilized debate, the clash of ideas to find that sensible center. By the way, that phrase is not mine. That phrase is Colin Powell's, a great American.

There it is, right there is the center. I am ready to walk over to it. Come on over, I say to the other side.

STIMULUS PACKAGE

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, today I am standing here asking for help on the stimulus package. I know that part of the stimulus package is to extend unemployment insurance. I absolutely support that. But what I also wish to do is not only extend unemployment insurance for those who are hurting, I am with the parts of the stimulus package that will extend employment, where we will do what we need to do to create the safety net, but we need to have a launching pad to keep jobs in this country. I wish to vote to extend unemployment help, but I wish to also vote to extend employment help. Hello. Let's find that sensible center.

I am for saving and creating jobs, and I am also saying: Congress must act now. In the next 48 to 72 hours, we have our own rendezvous. If we do not act, we will create an economic framework that means the recession will be longer and deeper. The cost of doing nothing is more than we can afford to pay.

I support the safety net in the economic recovery package—help with unemployment, energy assistance, help on Medicaid for the children and the elderly. Medicaid is a children's and elderly program, for children who need health care and elderly who need to be in nursing homes.

I also support the part of the stimulus that creates jobs. I salute our leadership team for coming up with the framework to create jobs by making important investments in physical infrastructure—desperately needed. We need to make public investments that generate private sector jobs. Note what Senator Barb is saying: I am not for make work. I am not for a WPA. I am for public investments that create private sector jobs. By doing it in building and rebuilding America's infrastructure, we will be safer, and we will have a stronger economy—repairing bridges, building highways, mass transit that we need to move people and improve the environment, also to build water and sewer treatment plants to fix aging sewer systems. In my hometown of Baltimore, our mayor is under an EPA court order to rebuild the Baltimore sewer system. I am for that. My great-grandfather, who came to this country

searching for the American dream, believing what Lady Liberty said when she said: Give me your tired, your poor, yearning to be free, another member of my family said: Sign me up. And he was a ditch digger on the Baltimore sewer system. My great-grandmother married him because he was a man of prospects. We rebuilt Baltimore then. I wish to rebuild Baltimore today and put people to work, from designing and engineering, moving heavy lifting equipment.

The Chesapeake Bay is polluted because we don't have enough water in sewer treatment plants. That is one of the reasons. So we can build that by making public investments in physical infrastructure. By sending a dollar of taxpayer money today, we will have jobs today and economic recovery on the way.

Also, I wished to talk about helping the automobile industry. My other colleagues will speak on the floor about the need for the \$25 billion plan. My colleagues will also speak about other things to help Detroit for which I am supportive. But I also have another idea. See, the way I think, I am old-fashioned. My dad ran a grocery store. While others talk about the big macro picture, I learned economics at the macaroni-and-cheese level in my dad's grocery store. It was about supply and demand. I am saying if we stimulate demand, which actually gets people to buy cars, people will have to make them. They will have to sell them. They will have to service them. They will have to provide the insurance and other services to do it.

Let me tell you how I wish to save jobs in the automobile industry and at the same time help our consumers and get our economy back on track. It is simple. It is straightforward. It is bipartisan. I am joined in my framework, which I introduced as a freestanding bill, by Senator KIT BOND of Missouri. More cosponsors are pouring in. My provision simply says this: If you buy a new passenger car or light truck between November 12 of this year and December 31 of next year, you will get a tax deduction on your sales tax and on the interest of your loan. Let me repeat that. It is a tax deduction for the sales tax on buying that car or light truck. You will also be able to deduct the interest on your loan. For many people, depending on the size of the vehicle, it can go anywhere from \$2,000 to \$5,000. It saves jobs. Remember where I started. Not only extend unemployment benefits to those who have lost their jobs but extend employment so people don't lose their jobs.

One out of every ten jobs in America depends on the automobile industry.

What is it I mean? First of all, in manufacturing—and we know what it feels like in Maryland. See this chart. On Broening Highway we made minivans for years. Now it is being cleared for who knows what. We know it has new uses but not like this. There were 1,000 jobs that paid good wages

and good salaries. I do not want "closed" signs up all over America. So it is jobs in manufacturing.

Then there are jobs in car dealerships. Did you know there are 30,000 car dealerships in America, and each one employs about 50 or 60 people—from the people who sell the cars, service the cars, supply the parts, and the back office workers handling the bookkeeping and the accounting.

In my own home State there are 300 dealers. If you look at the dealers nationwide, we are talking about 150,000 people. In my own State, it is over 25,000 people. In many of my rural communities, outside the hospital and local government, they are the major employer. Dealers are at risk. The people who work at the dealerships are at risk. We can change that.

Now, let me go to the rationale. Why now? Why the urgency? Well, first of all, car purchases, whether you are talking about a Toyota or a Taurus, whether you are talking about cars made in Detroit or made in Kentucky, Alabama or Tennessee or Texas, buying cars, with people going into the showrooms, is down by 25 percent.

But what we also know from the auto research is that people buy more cars during the period of Thanksgiving to New Year's Eve than any other 6-week period. If you pass the Mikulski-Bond amendment, and it is signed into law, and people come into the showroom, that is the time they want to buy cars, and this is the time we could give them the Federal incentive, along with the dealer and manufacturing incentives. It could mean tremendous help.

Now, there are those who will say: Gee, how much does this cost, Senator MIKULSKI? It does cost \$8 billion. However, the cost of doing nothing is phenomenal. The cost to the Government is about \$50 billion a year if we do nothing, if our automobile system goes down. If we face the "Armageddon" of one of them going bankrupt, our pension guaranty system would be in great difficulty. We would lose taxes in unemployment benefits. In other words, there is a cost to doing nothing that is 10 to 20 times greater than what we are talking about here.

I know my time is about up.

I say: Pass this stimulus package. Thanks to the leader, my auto provision is part of it. We need to talk about saving 3 million jobs in the automobile industry. We need to talk about how to help the American people.

I conclude by saying, during the break I went around and talked to my constituents. First of all, they are mad as the dickens over the way this bailout package has been handled. They feel we gave it to the sharks and the whales on Wall Street, and the little guys—the minnows—got no help. What they are worried about is the losing of their jobs. In many instances, they have already lost their life savings, they have lost their homes or they are already in jeopardy.

Let's talk about a car dealer. I walked in to talk to a dealer in Mont-

gomery County. The first thing was I noticed two things: an empty showroom and on his lapel he had a Rotary pin. This is a man for which that business, in Montgomery County, was started in 1939, during the Depression, because they believed in Roosevelt and they believed in the American economy. Can they believe in us?

That man, with his Rotary pin and family, has provided jobs. They fix cars. They have sold cars and so on. They kept it going and at the same time contributed to the charities in their community, being a good corporate citizen.

You talk to the people who work there. Let's talk to the guy I talked to who has worked there for 23 years. He said: Senator Barb, all I have ever wanted to do is fix cars. I love fixing cars, and I have fixed Chevys and now Accords and Acuras, and I have done a great job. I have been happy, and I have made a lot of people happy. But I have two kids in college. I was told that for the kind of job I have, there is a workforce shortage. But now there is more of a shortage of work than a shortage of workers.

This is whom we are fighting for. We are fighting for our friends. We are fighting for our neighbors. We are fighting for the people who have kept our communities going. So we come back to wonder: How are we going to spend money? We have already spent \$350 billion that went to banks that do not care. They have no remorse. They have no sense of gratitude, and they did not regard us as an investor. Mr. President, \$350 billion to banks and Paulson is walking around like a passive investor. But here, if we make this investment to enable the consumer to be in a new car, which will get more fuel efficiency, lower carbon emissions, and pick up our economy, I think we are doing something.

I hope today we get a chance to vote on the economic recovery bill. It has major components in it, and one of the major component is it extends employment, which is what Americans want.

On the day Barack Obama resigned from the Senate, let us now resign ourselves to follow what the mandate was on November 4. They not only gave President-elect Obama a mandate; they gave us a mandate: Get America rolling again. The Mikulski legislation puts our economy back on wheels.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alabama.

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I thank the Chair for the opportunity to speak. I appreciate the eloquent remarks of my colleague, Senator MIKULSKI. She is a passionate advocate for Middle America, and it is a pleasure to serve with her in the Senate.

I have to say, it is a historic day that Senator Obama has resigned and will be on the road now to inauguration as