

insurance, people who are struggling the most, I wish to thank Senator HARKIN for his work.

I wish to tell a story that I think illustrates the hardship among middle-class Americans, middle-class Ohioans, people who have worked hard, played by the rules, have seen their unemployment run out, or seen their job lost or seen the prices of gasoline and home heating and food go so high that they cannot afford the middle-class lifestyle or even the subsistence living that has afflicted their lives.

I mentioned this story on the floor a couple times, but it so much illustrates Senator HARKIN's words and Senator HARKIN's solutions of extending unemployment, that gets money in people's pockets quickly; of helping with food banks and food stamps and LIHEAP and all that.

Congress's response needs to be two-fold. We need to stimulate the economy, and the House version is a start, it is a good start, and we need to help those who are most victimized by the recession.

In Logan, OH, in Hocking County, a county halfway between Columbus in Central Ohio and Athens on the Ohio River, in Logan, OH, a southeast Appalachian county, on a cold December day about a month ago, at 3:30 in the morning people began to line up outside the United Methodist in Logan, the county seat of Hocking County, to get food. It was 3:30 in the morning on a cold winter day. By 8 o'clock, cars were snaked around the church and the neighborhood and up and down the streets when the food pantry opened. By 1 o'clock in the afternoon, 2,000 people—2,000 people in a county of about 30,000—7 percent of the county, had come to this food pantry.

Many of those in this county had driven 20, 25 or 30 minutes to get there, a county that has had problems in the past but a county where that food bank served only a few dozen people 3 or 4 or 5 years ago.

Across the State, in Warren County, a relatively affluent community overall, a larger county northeast of Cincinnati down in southwest Ohio, the head of the United Way told me 90 percent of their people who come to their food pantries in their county, 90 percent of the people have jobs.

The mayor of Denver told a group of us, the Presiding Officer was there, that 40 percent of the homeless people in greater Denver are employed. Underemployed, perhaps, employed obviously in low-wage jobs.

Tim, a gentleman from Cleveland, used to donate time and money to the local food bank and soup kitchen. He is still employed, but the costs were consuming him and his family. He quit giving money to the food bank but continued to volunteer there. Now he is in a position where he relies on those resources himself. He said he used to be middle class, but he does not consider himself middle class any more because his wages have not kept pace with the

cost of basic needs such as food, heat, and shelter.

He spoke of the great humility it took to go to the food bank for his own household. He said it is merely a drop in the bucket compared to what his family needs.

Today my office received an alarming e-mail from Ohio's Second Harvest. Second Harvest is a group of food banks that serve our State. The e-mail mail explained that Second Harvest Food Bank of Southeastern Ohio, which serves the area where Logan is, the community I mentioned earlier, is nearly out of food. For the fourth time in just over a year, the e-mail said, they have come very close to closing their doors; there is no relief in sight.

This problem is not unique to Ohio, it is affecting cities all over this country. It is affecting rural areas, large cities, small towns, and suburbs. No community seems to be immune from this.

That is why our efforts are so very important. Senator HARKIN had a chart that showed the importance of putting money directly into the pockets of those who are most afflicted by this recession. That means people who go to food banks; it means people on food stamps; it means people who have problems paying their heating bill; it means people whose unemployment has run out.

I appreciate the House action. As I said, the House has a good start, putting money into the pockets directly of middle-class taxpayers, of working families. But we need to do more. The best thing we can do while we want to stimulate the economy, the best thing we can do is extend unemployment compensation. Because that money will be spent by those people who are hurting because they lost their job, they cannot find work, and their unemployment has run out.

Our proposal of \$40 million that I introduced back in December may need to be more than that, but that would be a good start, to get people over December, January, February as these food banks have run out of food. That \$40 million spread around the country will matter, as these food banks say they are in the worst shape than any time in the last 20 years. They are in worse shape because grocery stores donate less because they are more efficient, they damage fewer cans, they have less oversupply or waste that they donated to food banks in the past.

Obviously, the demand on these food banks is so much greater than it has been. Again, I would also add that donations are down in January. They always are after Christmas. People, as generous as they are at Christmas, sometimes sort of forget in January, so they are not getting help from the individuals and the community. Of course, the demands on those food banks are higher.

So that stimulus package, while a good start in the House, putting money in the pockets of middle-class Ameri-

cans and working Americans, needs to go further and needing to go further is helping the most afflicted, pained, the people who need it most and have been victims of this recession.

As Senator HARKIN said, that money will then be spent in our communities with American-made products and will have a very good multiplying effect for jump-starting our economy.

No one should go hungry in the richest country in the world. We are spending \$3 billion a week on the war in Iraq. The tax cuts the President gave over the last 6 years resulted in huge numbers of dollars to the richest people, the richest 1 percent in this country. It is time we dealt with some of the problems that are hurting people in Steubenville and Lima and Zanesville and Dayton and Cleveland and Akron and Youngstown and Warren in my State.

So I ask, as this bill comes to the Senate after House passage, that we look seriously at the proposal Senator HARKIN had to take care of food stamps and food banks, to extend unemployment benefits, to take care of seniors who simply cannot meet their heating bills as the winter moves on.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the stimulus package and the progress we are making, and the further progress we must make.

As is being reported, this morning the House is very close—probably already there—on a bipartisan stimulus package. This in itself is good news. Our economy is in poor shape. It is not simply the housing markets—where this started—but it is also now consumer spending. As housing prices go down, because of the subprime crisis, consumers spend less, and it also creates a credit freeze. Now we are finding credit problems not only in subprime loans and subprime securities but also with the insurers, the insurance, the mortgage and other insurers, which makes the markets wonder: Are there credit problems elsewhere, which is the most frightening issue we might have.

With all of this happening, Chairman Bernanke's swift action made a good deal of sense. But it must be matched by swift action by the executive branch of Government and the legislative branch of Government in putting together a stimulus package. I think the package—I have always said, and I think most Democrats and Republicans would agree—the centerpiece ought to be a tax cut, a tax refund check sent to the middle class.

It is the middle class that needs the help. It is the middle class that would spend it the most quickly. It makes a great deal of sense. It also makes sense to send it to those who are the working poor—not quite middle class—for the same reasons, even if they do not pay an income tax. It also makes sense to send those checks to people on Social Security who would file a tax return but might not pay even a payroll tax.

The bill the House has done in terms of the centerpiece is very good progress. It has taken the tax rebate checks and aimed them right at the middle class, where it should be, whereas the President's proposal aimed them significantly higher. In the President's initial proposal, someone making \$300,000 or \$400,000 a year would get the full rebate, and families earning between \$30,000 or \$40,000 would get less than the full amount, or nothing at all. So that is great progress.

I salute the House and Speaker PELOSI and Secretary Paulson and Minority Leader BOEHNER for their progress. But the package is not complete. While it is a very good first step, we need to move a little further. One of the things many of us on this side have always felt is that spending stimuli are necessary. Most importantly—for efficiency reasons, to get the economy moving—the rebate tax checks will not get into people's hands until May, at the earliest, maybe June, or maybe even July. Some say they will spend the money in anticipation of those checks but not very many. Rebate tax checks, while they do have a very significant effect on boosting the economy, do not come close to being as efficient as unemployment insurance and lengthening the time, and maybe changing and expanding the benefit temporarily.

CBO—nonpartisan—estimates for every \$1 you spend on unemployment insurance, you get a \$1.64 boost to the economy. That is great. That is phenomenal. For every \$1 you spend on a tax refund—it is still very good, and still should be done—it is only \$1.26.

We have always felt, again, that there ought to be two bookends, one on each side of the centerpiece on tax spending refunds. One should be business tax cuts. They should be aimed to be speedy and quick, but they should be balanced off by some spending stimuli.

The House bill does not have spending stimuli, and it is something I believe many of my colleagues—certainly myself—are going to try very hard to add to the package. Those spending stimuli should focus on employment insurance but could be for other things: money for summer jobs; money, if it can be spent quickly, for infrastructure; money for nutrition assistance, things such as that. I think that will add more balance to the package, but it will also make it more effective as a tool to stimulate the economy.

The second change I think we need is a focus on the housing prices. I salute my colleagues in the House—Speaker PELOSI, Congressman FRANK—because they worked hard to add some things we have been talking about for a long time to deal with the housing crisis, the conforming loan limit, and FHA reform. Those are very good and important because, after all, if the housing crisis is at the center of our problems, to ignore it, to work around it, is not doing everything we can to help elimi-

nate or at least reduce the severity of a recession.

There are some other issues we should consider looking at as we move the bill in the Senate. Most importantly, dollars—some spending; it will not be very much, actually, but some spending for counseling, foreclosure avoidance counseling, which could prevent tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of homes from being foreclosed on unnecessarily. There are many people in these homes who do have the ability to refinance given their income, given their FICO scores, but there is no one there to help them do it because the banks are no longer on the scene. These counselors would work. Secretary Paulson has told me the administration has no problem with this kind of proposal.

We did put \$180 million in the last omnibus budget bill. Senator CASEY, Senator BROWN, myself, with Senator MURRAY's great help, spearheaded the charge on that. But we should do more. We should look at other housing additions as well. Again, they will have to be broadly supported, bipartisan, and not hold up the package.

Finally, the third aspect we should talk about is we do need a second stimulus package to look at the long-range problems. We have many different structural problems in the economy now. A long-range package that would focus more on infrastructure, on trade adjustment assistance, on reforming unemployment insurance, and many other things, is very much needed. On the business side, too, tax credits for energy, for instance, for clean energy and green energy, are something we should seriously consider.

The third point I would make—and this is not at all a criticism of the House because we always intended there be a first package that is quick, gets into the economy quickly, does not create controversy—we need a second package aimed at the longer term.

In conclusion, this is a very good start. Again, I particularly salute Speaker PELOSI and the House Democratic leadership for so improving the President's proposal on the tax refund. I also salute Minority Leader BOEHNER and his Republican colleagues for working so closely with the Democratic leadership on this issue.

But we do need more. We need some spending stimuli. We need more done to deal with the housing crisis, which is at the center of these economic troubled times. And we do need a long-range package that aims at the structural problems in the economy. If we can do that, and add on to the great start that has been made by the House, we will have done the right thing in a bipartisan way to move this country forward and avoid a recession—unlikely, but it may be possible; let's hope and pray—certainly a deep and long recession that would hurt so many people and families.

RECONCILIATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, on Sunday, January 20, Mikhail Saakashvili was inaugurated as President of the Republic of Georgia. He won an election that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE, referred to as “the first genuinely competitive presidential election in the country, enabling the Georgian people to express their political choice.” I wish President Saakashvili and the people of Georgia well.

President Saakashvili's program of reform and integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions, such as NATO, depends on the strength of Georgia's democracy. At the same time, membership in those institutions will reinforce and protect Georgia's democracy.

When I spoke with President Saakashvili in November, I was confident that he understood the close connection between these two goals. In order to achieve them, reconciliation between the President and his political opponents is essential.

Despite the findings of OSCE international monitors, the Georgian opposition repudiated the election's results and took to the street. In 16 years of independence there has never been a peaceful transfer of power in Georgia. Perhaps the time has come to move the debate off the street and into Parliament.

In my 35 years in the Senate, I have seen just how powerful a vehicle for change a democratically elected body can be. I hope the opposition parties will focus their energies on April's parliamentary elections, reinvigorating the Parliament and promoting progress from within.

On the same day that they gathered to elect a President, 73 percent of the Georgian electorate affirmed their interest in Georgia joining NATO. I support their aspirations and I am confident that the people of Georgia, united by a sense of common purpose, can and will realize their full potential and achieve great things.

BUDGET SCOREKEEPING REPORT

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise to submit to the Senate the fourth budget scorekeeping report for the 2008 budget resolution. The report, which covers fiscal year 2008, was prepared by the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 308(b) and in aid of section 311 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, as amended.

The report shows the effect of congressional action through January 23, 2008, and includes legislation that was enacted and or cleared for the President's signature since I filed my last report for fiscal year 2008. The new legislation includes:

P.L. 110-53, Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007;

P.L. 110-84, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act;