

the largest plant of its type in the world. There may be one in Spain that may be a tiny bit bigger, but let's assume it is not. It is a huge plant. We have this going on all over Nevada as a result of the economic recovery package and tax incentives we give people to build green energy—clean energy jobs. That vast array in the middle of the desert, dotted by countless hard hats worn by people working very hard, was truly an impressive sight.

This afternoon at 5:30 we are going on to something extremely important, especially for people who have been struggling in America. We need to continue supporting projects such as, of course, the solar plant in Boulder City and continue moving toward a clean energy economy. They demand critical long-term investments and we have a long way to go. But there are additional things we can do right now this afternoon at 5:30 to help millions of hard-working Nevadans and Americans struggling to find work. These are not deadbeats; these are not bums; these are people who are out of work and have been out of work for a long time and have struggled to find a job. If we pass this emergency extension of unemployment and health benefits, we can give those unemployed families the help they need to put food on the table or go to the doctor.

Some on the other side flatly refuse to do so. To them it doesn't matter that these people lost their jobs through no fault of their own or that they are desperate to find a new full-time job and that this is an emergency, not only for our families but for our country. Many of those who oppose this extension voted to give tax breaks to rich chief executive officers who shipped American jobs overseas. Now that their constituents are trying to find jobs of their own, I hope they will consider giving them at least the short-term help they need and need critically. If Republicans continue blocking unemployment assistance, 1 million Americans will lose that lifeline by the end of this month.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

WEST VIRGINIA MINE DISASTER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, while we were in recess, the people of West Virginia experienced a very difficult mine safety experience. Our neighbors in West Virginia, like Kentucky, are big coal producers. We have had our share, in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, over the years of mining disasters, and our hearts and prayers go out to our neighbors in West Virginia as they attempt to recover from the latest tragedy in what is obviously a very dangerous profession, and that is mining of coal.

POLISH TRAGEDY

We also witnessed a great tragedy overseas, the death of the Polish President Lech Kaczynski, his wife, and so many other Polish leaders over the weekend. This is obviously a terrible tragedy for Poland and a great loss for us as well. Poland is a great friend of the United States and we send our heartfelt condolences and every expression of solidarity to the Polish people and the families of the dead at this very difficult time.

LONG-TERM FISCAL SECURITY

Turning back to home now, I want to welcome everybody back. I hope everyone had a restful and productive break. My constituents have never been shy about sharing their views on what we are doing here in Washington. These past 2 weeks were no different. To be perfectly blunt: Kentuckians are concerned about the direction of our country. They are overwhelmingly opposed to the health spending bill, what it will cost, and the process used to pass it. And more generally, Kentuckians, and Americans everywhere, are concerned about the consequences of the endless borrowing and spending here in Washington.

Americans worry that we are on the cusp or maybe even past the cusp of a debt crisis. And they are frustrated. They don't understand how lawmakers in Washington can ignore this looming disaster after just narrowly averting the last one. Americans know that this is one crisis no bailout could ever prevent. We could borrow a trillion dollars to dig the country out of a mess that was created on Wall Street, but once the government maxes out its own credit card, there is nowhere to turn—except to the citizens themselves.

So the time to act is now. The deficit this year alone is projected to be more than \$1.4 trillion. Social Security recently started paying out more than it is taking in. Interest payments alone on the national debt are approaching \$1 trillion a year. Interest rates on mortgages, student loans, and small business loans are threatening to rise. There is no reason to think the problems we are seeing in Europe won't strike here at home if we do nothing to reverse current trends.

Those who continue to use the taxpayer credit card with reckless abandon threaten not only our chances of a quick recovery and the jobs it would create but also the nation's long-term fiscal security—and a safety net that has been built up over the decades precisely for moments like this. Democrats can no longer hide behind the argument of good intentions when the results threaten our very stability as a nation.

We must get a handle on the deficit and the debt. This is the issue that will focus our attention in the weeks and months ahead. And over the coming weeks, I assure you, Republicans will continue to give our colleagues across the aisle and our President the opportunity to live up to the President's

commitment on February 13: "Now, Congress will have to pay for what it spends, just like everybody else." Americans will not tolerate another crisis of Washington's making.

SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Another issue we will be focused on, of course, is the Supreme Court. Justice Stevens' decision last week to retire from the Court gives us another opportunity to discuss the proper role of our Federal courts and our Constitution.

Last year, during the debate over Justice Sotomayor's nomination, Americans saw the Senate debate and discuss the President's "empathy" standard for judicial appointments. At the end of that debate, most Americans—and indeed Justice Sotomayor herself, along with Senators of the President's own party—rejected that standard and agreed with Republicans that judges ought to apply the law, not their own feelings and personal preferences.

We are hopeful that this time around the President will select someone with extensive real-world legal experience and a demonstrated commitment to the rule of law. That is what Americans expect from their judges, whether it is small claims court or the Supreme Court. They do not expect us to select judges based upon whose side the judge is on, as one Democrat on the Judiciary Committee once suggested.

Once the President submits his nominee, Senate Republicans will diligently review his or her record so the American people can be confident that they will be able to fulfill the judicial oath; namely, to administer "justice without respect to persons and to do right by the poor and by the rich." I am hopeful that at the end of the day, I and other Republicans will be convinced that the nominee will be able to do so.

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. There will now be a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Illinois.

EXPRESSING SORROW TO WEST VIRGINIA AND POLAND

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I join my colleagues in expressing my sorrow to the families of West Virginia for the coal miners who were lost in that disaster. Illinois is a coal mining State. Throughout our history we have had terrible mine disasters and the loss of

life. I hope we can not only bring them consolation but that we can learn from this disaster. When we find that only a small portion of the fines that have been imposed on coal companies for safety violations have been paid, it clearly calls for a much more aggressive approach by our Federal Government and the agencies that are entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the safety of these coal miners. We can do better.

One of the saddest comments, but I am afraid true comments, came from my colleague Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER, who said these tragedies are likely to occur again no matter how much we do.

Congressman NICK RAHALL said: unfortunately, reform, when it comes to coal mine safety, is written in the blood of dead coal miners. But let us use their lives as an inspiration to do a better job of writing the laws and enforcing the laws so that the men and women who work in this perilous trade have the protection of their government.

Second, I will be speaking at length at a later time, but I want to join with those who expressed their sorrow over the death of the President and First Lady of Poland and so many of the government leaders. It is said there are more Polish Americans living in Chicago, IL, than in any other city than Warsaw, Poland. We have a proud, strong Polish population in and around the city of Chicago. They have been through much in their lives. Many of them came to this country to escape the horrors of World War II. They have built their families, their neighborhoods, their churches, their parishes—they have built our city, the city of Chicago, and many others in my State. They were in grief and mourning as they gathered over the weekend at a Polish cemetery to express their sorrow for the loss of their President and First Lady.

The people of Poland have been inspired by faith and family in times of adversity. They will be again. I will have more remarks to make on that subject at a later point.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

The minority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, Republican of Kentucky, before we left, said, wait until you go home and listen to people about health care reform.

So I did. I went all across Illinois, and I spent 2 weeks. I went right into the teeth of the most conservative parts of Illinois, held meetings, answered questions, and by and large people had some impressions of what the bill did but did not know the details on what it was going to do and how it was going to change their lives.

I talked to them about the fact that there are literally people working today in our State of Illinois—1.4 million of them—without health insurance. Many times, these people and their children have lived a whole life without health insurance.

On the Senate floor, I spoke of a lady I met in a Hampton Inn in Marion, IL. Her name is Judy. What a sweetheart. She is there every morning cleaning off the tables, greeting everyone with a smile. She has become my buddy because we stop there, and we talk about southern Illinois and what is going on. On the last trip there, I talked to her about health care reform. She was worried about it.

What is it going to do to me? Is it going to mandate that I buy health insurance? I do not make a lot of money, Senator.

I said: Do you have health insurance? She said: Senator, come on. I have never had health insurance in my life. I am a waitress.

Never had health insurance in her life.

How old are you, Judy?

Fifty-nine.

Never had health insurance.

Never, she said. When you saved up enough money, you went to the doctor and you had to make do.

Well, how is your health, I asked her.

She said: Well, I have high blood sugar.

I said: How high?

She said: I do not know. I cannot get to the doctor regularly, but when it gets very bad, I get checked out. He says: I have to do something about it.

That is what she told me on the last trip. When I saw her on this trip, I almost did not recognize her. She had dropped 25 pounds, and she looked pretty weak. But she came to me and she said: Well, my blood sugar is acting up again. I have lost 25 pounds. But I never missed a day of work. I came in here every day.

Judy would be covered by this health care reform bill. She will have health insurance for the first time in her life, under Medicaid. She will be able to be taken care of. She will have a doctor looking at her blood sugar to make sure she does not go blind or lose a limb. That is what this health care reform bill does.

Before we left town, I had one of my staff call a local doctor and ask him, as a personal favor, to see her. He said he would. I thanked him so much for doing that. I hope he can help her along.

As we left town, though, I went by Carbondale, IL, home of Southern Illinois University. There is a baseball coach there named Danny Callahan. I have known him since he was 6 years old. He is a great guy; probably in his forties now; two or three kids. He was diagnosed with melanoma 6 or 8 years ago from a sunburn he got as a baseball player, and it had spread. He has been battling cancer ever since. He has had tumors removed, his lower jaw removed, and he is trying to hang on. His doctor came up with a therapy for him, a cancer therapy for him, that works, that slows down the progress of the cancer. When they turned in the bill for the cancer therapy, the health insurance company said: No, we do not

cover that. Well, it cost \$14,000 a month. Danny cannot afford that. He has been in court in a battle with this health insurance company to get the drugs his doctor wants to give him to save his life. Sadly, that battle still goes on.

The health reform bill we passed will give Danny and his family and others like him a fighting chance against health insurance companies. So when I hear the Republican leader come to the floor and tell us we are going to catch this firestorm of opposition, I think of these cases, of those people, and how, if we did nothing, their lives could not be as good. In fact, some of them may suffer as a result of the current system and the law.

We are going to have a vote this afternoon, for those who follow the Senate. It is a vote about unemployment benefits. You see, many of us believe we are in an economic emergency in this country with about 8 million people unemployed, another 6 million under long-term unemployment—almost 15 million Americans unemployed, looking for work. For some of them, we have been extending unemployment benefits so they can get by. It is about \$300 a week. For families who have been going through this for a long time, with unemployment that has lasted over a year, we know what they have been through. They have lost their life savings, and they have nowhere to turn. So on an emergency basis, we have been extending unemployment benefits and health insurance coverage for the unemployed in this country. We tried to do it again before we left for this 2-week Easter break, and there was an objection from the Republican side of the aisle. Senator COBURN of Oklahoma has objected. What it means is that as of 1 week ago, we started cutting people off from coverage for unemployment benefits in America because of the objection of one Senator. How many people? Over 200,000 lost their unemployment benefits across America in the first week; another 200,000 will lose their benefits this week; and by the end of the month, 1 million Americans will lose their unemployment benefits because 1 Senator objected and they do not want to bring this to a vote.

If you want to know why a Senator who is, like myself, drawing a paycheck and living a pretty comfortable life would want to cut off unemployment benefits for those who are struggling, the argument was mentioned earlier by the Republican leader: It is time to fight the deficit. Let's fight the deficit when it comes to unemployment benefits in America. That is the stand they are taking. It is interesting to me that many of these same Senators thought nothing of an \$800 billion bailout for the banks when they were in trouble. That was not paid for. Mr. President, \$800 billion for banks—oh, we have to do that—but when it comes to helping the unemployed in this country, oh, that is going to break the bank. When are we ever going to learn?

I am getting a little tired of being preached to by the other said of the aisle about fiscal conservatism. It was their President, the last President, who more than doubled the national debt in this country, from \$5 trillion to \$12 trillion. It was under their watch that we engaged in two wars and did not pay for any of it, added it to the national debt. It was under their watch that they called for tax breaks for the wealthiest people in America in the midst of a war and added it directly to the debt. Now when we come to the floor and say, for goodness' sake, give the unemployed in this country the basics of life to get by, they say we cannot afford it; we have this deficit. When it came to the bank bailout, we did not hear a word about the deficit. When it came to paying for these wars, which we did not do, we did not hear these deficit hawks. When it came to a prescription drug benefit that cost \$400 billion, they did not pay for it. The list goes on.

I look at my State and think, 16,000 people in Illinois lost their health insurance because 1 Republican Senator objected; 2,600 from his home State of Oklahoma. And the number grows by the week. What are we going to do about this? They want to pay for this by taking the money out of programs we are going to use to put people to work, taking the money away from projects that are going to be built across America to put construction workers back to work. Construction trades have one of the highest unemployment rates in America, over 25 percent. They are talking about cutting the money from the projects to pay for unemployment benefits. That is not going to bring us out of the recession; it is going to create more unemployment in the process. That is what this debate is all about.

There are ways we can address this deficit, and should. There is a Presidential commission which I am going to serve on with a number of Republicans and Democrats. It will not be easy. But why in the world do we want to fight this battle today on the backs of those who are unemployed and losing their benefits? It literally means that thousands across America are going to have to do without.

What do you do when you have exhausted your savings, you have no job, you are about to lose your home, and it is a real question about whether you can keep going down to the food pantry or the soup kitchen? If you don't think that is happening, check out your hometown. That is exactly what is happening. The Republican answer is, cut off the benefits and tell them we have to cut the projects to build the roads, to build the bridges, and make more unemployment in the construction trade sector in order to pay for this. That, to me, is not a good approach. It is not a humane approach. If we can just get as much compassion from the other side of the aisle for unemployed workers as we had for bank bailouts,

we would have a chance of feeding those people and keeping their families together during one of the worst economic turns we have seen in America.

The vote later on today—we will need 60 votes in order to continue to move forward on unemployment benefits. We do not have those votes on this side of the aisle. We will need Republican votes. The last time we dealt with this a month or so ago, a number of Republicans stepped forward and helped. I hope we do the same this afternoon.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona.

JOBS IMPACT

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, last week I traveled around my State of Arizona to large towns and small, and I heard from many of my constituents. Arizonians have very serious concerns about what is happening here in Washington. They are worried about the direction in which our country has moved and about the kind of Nation their kids and their grandkids will inherit. They are unhappy about the tremendous levels of spending and debt and about how new taxes and regulations threaten jobs and our economy. It is not an overstatement to say that people are outraged about what they perceive as irresponsible behavior in Washington. Many are frustrated because they feel as if they have lost control of their government. Today, I wish to focus on three specific concerns I heard, and they all relate to how taxes and regulations are impacting jobs in my home State.

First is the health spending bill. If anyone thinks the American people will have forgotten about this in a few months, I can assure you they will not have. They are overwhelmingly opposed to this law, and they are frustrated that it was passed despite widespread opposition. They are upset about the high cost, the new taxes, the massive regulations, and the manner in which it was passed.

Arizona's employers and the unemployed workers are both affected by the new taxes and mandates in the bill that will prevent hiring. How? Well, many small business owners in Arizona are wondering how they are supposed to hire new employees when they are about to be slapped with a new payroll tax. Of course, a payroll tax is a direct tax on hiring.

Arizona employers with more than 50 workers face a second problem: they will face steep fines if they do not comply with the new mandate that they provide health insurance to all of their employees. It is another disincentive to create a job or even to retain current employees.

The refrain I heard from employers and other Arizonians over and over again is: You have to repeal this bill. And I agree.

The second concern I heard a lot about was unemployment insurance

and its impact on jobs. I will discuss in just a moment the concern the employers have about their share of the expense of unemployment insurance. But first of all, let me address comments just made by my colleague from Illinois, who suggested that Republicans wanted to leave people who are unemployed out in the lurch, that we did not support extending unemployment benefits. That, of course, is not true. I voted for every extension of benefits, as have the majority of my colleagues. The question is, Who should pay for the extension? My colleague suggests that it is not a question of who but whether it should be paid for. It is said over and over again: The question is whether it should be paid for. Well, it is not a matter of whether. It will have to be paid for. That is to say, we are borrowing the money. We have to pay that money back. It is a question of whether we pay for it or we simply say: Put it on the tab for our kids and our grandkids to pay for it.

So the question is, to extend unemployment benefits again to folks alongside us, who have the misfortune of having lost their job, until they can get another job, who is going to pay to extend their unemployment benefits? It seems to me that is an obligation of this generation.

My kids and grandkids are going to have plenty to worry about in their generations. They will probably face the prospect of some unemployment, too, and they are probably going to have to extend unemployment benefits, and somebody will have to pay for that. The question is, Who? Are we going to make them pay not only for what happens on their watch but also what happened on our watch that we were not able to pay for?

That is the question: Are we able to? To extend these benefits for the period of time we were taking about just before the recess was \$9.5 billion. And I don't think one could contend that somewhere in the Federal budget we can't find \$9.5 billion over the course of the year which could be used to pay for these benefits. If they are a top priority, then that is what should be used to pay for the benefits. It is a 30-day period of time.

Interestingly, during the debate before the Easter recess, we actually had an agreement for about 45 minutes in this Chamber where Republicans and Democrats alike agreed that to ensure there would not be a hiatus where benefits would not be extended—and by the way, the physicians would be reimbursed for the care they provide to Medicare patients—we agreed on a set of revenue measures that would pay for a week of these benefits so that there would be no period of time that there would be a hiatus, that they would not be paid for. But someone from the other side had to call the Speaker of the House to make sure that was OK with the House of Representatives.

I am told it was the Speaker who said: No, we will not pay for the extension of benefits. We will not do that.