

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Madam President, another question. Under the Budget Act, which limits the time for debate of a reconciliation conference report, how many hours are provided for debate?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Ten hours.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Thank you. And finally, therefore, under no circumstances would a cloture vote be necessary or required prior to a vote on adoption of a reconciliation conference report?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware is recognized.

Mr. KAUFMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IN PRAISE OF ANNE GALLAGHER

Mr. KAUFMAN. Madam President, I rise today to recognize another great Federal employee. In the past year we have witnessed the most significant economic downturn since the Great Depression. In the 1930s, millions of Americans lost everything and there was no social safety net to catch those in the greatest need. Today we are fortunate that the Federal Government coordinates vital programs, preventing millions of Americans from slipping into the kind of poverty experienced in those days.

I think probably the most important agency involved in this effort is the Social Security Administration. Its mission is to provide a stable income for retired American workers and those who cannot work because of a disability.

In the words of the great revolutionary patriot Thomas Paine, "it is not charity but a right, not bounty but justice."

He wrote those words in 1797, when he published an early proposal for social security. It was only in the midst of the Great Depression that such a system was finally established by the Social Security Act of 1935.

Seventy-five years later, the SSA's important work continues. One of the great Social Security employees is Anne Gallagher, who has made a career of Federal Government work.

Anne, who grew up in Wilmington, DE and still lives there, has worked for Social Security for 8 years. As a child, Anne attended the Wilmington Friends School, and she later received her undergraduate degree from Mary Baldwin College. After pursuing further study in New York, she worked for 2 years in the broadcasting industry.

In 1976, Anne began a lifetime of public service, working for then-Senator Bill Roth, who was then the senior Senator of Delaware, in his Wilmington office. Her role as senior caseworker

for constituent services was to intercede on behalf of Delawareans with Federal agencies.

If you were a veteran who needed help accessing VA resources or benefits, Anne was the staff member in Senator Roth's office who would contact the VA for you. If you were trying to adopt a child from overseas but had an issue with the State Department that needed clearing up, Anne would clear it up.

It was during this time, when I was chief of staff to Delaware's junior Senator JOE BIDEN, that I first met Anne and witnessed firsthand her unmatched dedication and positive attitude. JOE BIDEN has wonderful caseworkers. They all thought very highly of Anne. And the two offices worked together seamlessly to serve the people of Delaware.

Anne handled important casework for Senator Roth for 7 years before deciding to take time off to raise her two daughters, who, by the way, both share their mother's passion for serving the public. But the call to serve was strong, and after 3 years away from Senator Roth's office, Anne returned. She continued working as an advocate for Delawareans until Senator Roth left office in 2001. At the same time, she still served as the legislative assistant for veterans affairs from 1994 to 1997.

In 2001, Anne spent several months working as the director of a nonprofit helping American families adopt children from overseas.

In 2002, she returned to government service when she became a Regional Public Affairs Specialist for the Social Security Administration. In this role, Anne serves as the Social Security congressional liaison for five States and the District of Columbia, which include 10 Senate offices and 43 House districts. The reports issued by her office help Members of Congress as well as other Federal, State, and local officials understand the status of Social Security distribution in their jurisdictions.

Throughout her work in Social Security and Senator Roth's office, Anne has earned a reputation for thoroughness, dedication, and a kind heart. I never met anyone who has dealt with Anne who did not like her, was not impressed with her kindness, her intelligence, and her ability to get things done. Once, while working for Senator Roth, Anne received a call from an elderly woman who had been in touch with her regarding a casework issue. It was in the midst of a snowstorm, and the woman, who lived alone, could not get to the grocery store for herself. So 45 minutes later Anne and her husband pulled up to the woman's house with a careful of groceries. Many of those she helped still keep in touch with her, even after 20 years.

I hope my colleagues will join me in honoring Anne Gallagher and thanking her for her service to the Nation and the State of Delaware. I also hope all Americans will recognize the impor-

tant contribution made by all who work for the Social Security Administration and all those who work for the Federal Government.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BURRIS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TIME FOR BOLD ACTION

Mr. BURRIS. Madam President, last night, just down the hall from this Chamber, my colleagues and I assembled with our friends in the House of Representatives to take part in a tradition as old as our Republic.

This is more than just a Presidential address.

It is mandated by the U.S. Constitution, and it is one of the great rituals of modern democracy, the practice of bringing the major officers of our government together to assess our national priorities.

Last night, President Obama laid out a bold vision for the years ahead, and a renewed commitment to the uniquely American ideals that make this country great.

So today, I would like to take this opportunity to discuss a few of the things we heard in yesterday's speech, and how our agenda will benefit the people of Illinois.

I am glad the President recognizes that this is not a time to change our priorities it is a time to recommit ourselves to the values and the ideas that the American people voted for in 2008.

The mandate for better policy could not have been more clear.

Voters want us to focus on job creation. They want us to help small businesses, repair our national economy, and invest in clean energy.

They want us to pass real health care reform, reduce the deficit, and keep corporate money separate from politics.

Under President Obama's leadership, my colleagues and I have already made significant progress on a number of these issues.

A year ago, we passed far-reaching economic recovery legislation that brought us back from the brink of disaster.

We voted to extend unemployment benefits, and keep sending help to the people who need it most during these difficult times.

Even today, we are poised to take up job creation and climate change bills, and are closer to passing comprehensive health reform than ever in our history.

We are examining ways to address the deficit, and in pursuit of that goal I believe we need to keep all options on the table.

And in the wake of the recent Supreme Court ruling, which dealt a major blow to campaign finance reform, I believe we need to take steps to minimize the ability of giant corporations to influence elections. We need to keep companies from overriding the voice of the people in Congress.

Our system is designed for incremental change, so none of these things will come easily.

But the agenda set by this President, and the demands of this trying moment in history, dictate that we must set aside our partisan differences and come together to solve big problems.

We have made gains over the last year, and we are continuing to make tangible strides almost every single day.

So I would like to talk about what this means for my home State of Illinois.

When Congress passed a sweeping economic recovery plan about a year ago, this country was losing more than 700,000 jobs a month, and the economy was in freefall.

Today, the economy is growing for the first time in 2 years, and job losses have fallen to a tenth of what they were last year.

For ordinary Illinoisans, this has made a real difference.

In Danville, IL, recovery act funding created 20 jobs at the East Central Illinois Community Agency. It put additional police officers on the street and created 14 jobs at the local housing authority.

It created summer jobs that allowed local kids to help support their families. It helped fund a Head Start program in neighboring Gibson City, and it funded three local projects through the Illinois Department of Transportation.

This is the measurable impact our legislation has had on only one community in Illinois.

But letters and phone calls and news stories have been pouring into my office from across the State, and the message is always the same.

From Danville, to Chicago, to Rockford, to Elmwood Park, I have heard from Illinoisans who have felt the positive effects of our new economic foundation.

We must not forget that America is still on the road to recovery. But our policies have already made a real difference in people's lives.

One Danville business owner even said: "I was leery of the whole stimulus thing at first, but they got it right."

That is why it is time to look ahead.

It is time to redouble our efforts and prove our commitment to the values the American people voted for in the last election.

The national economy is no longer in freefall, but there are still far too many people without jobs and far too many families that are struggling to make ends meet.

We need to use the remaining recovery act funds to create more jobs in

cities such as Danville, IL, and across America.

We need to provide tangible help to the small businesses that form the backbone of our economy, and the local banks that are essential to our national prosperity.

As a former banker myself, I understand how important these institutions are to the communities they serve. And I know they are hurting badly right now.

I am grateful that the President shares my support for these initiatives. And I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate and with the administration to take action.

Already, President Obama's speech is being analyzed by the media as a partisan rallying cry, a recap of the administration's record, and a dozen other things.

But as I sat on the House floor last night, I heard more than that.

I heard a bipartisan call to arms, a sober recognition of the current situation, and a strong vision for job creation, continued economic recovery, and healthcare reform in the coming year.

The truth is, the American people do not need politicians in Washington to tell them about the current State of the Union.

They are the Union. They know about the challenges we face, and the distance we have yet to go.

They do not care about partisan politics, or electoral math, or which party has the majority in Congress.

The American people are interested in the answer to one question: Where do we go from here?

So, as we set out to tackle the ambitious agenda that was laid out last night, we must approach these proposals with the same mindset.

We must draw our energy and our strength from the American people, and summon the principles and ideas that can make that vision a reality.

This is not about scoring political points or winning elections.

It is about how we move forward together as a Congress, as a nation, and as a people.

It is about making a difference for the hard-working people of Illinois, and every other State in the country.

This is a time to be thoughtful and reflective and forward-thinking, but it is also a time to roll up our sleeves.

Colleagues, as President Obama reminded us last night, this is a time for bold action.

So today, let us get to work.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington State is recognized.

BERNANKE NOMINATION

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I rise to speak on the vote we had earlier on the nomination of Ben Bernanke to be the Federal Reserve Chairman. While I did not support Mr. Bernanke's reconfirmation to that post, I would

like to take the time now to talk about that vote and my concerns and the challenges I think our country faces moving forward.

When I look at this issue, I know that not one administration or not one Fed Chairman got us into the mess we are in. In fact, it is not even to be blamed on one party. What this is about is how we move forward with complete transparency and the proper regulation to give certainty and predictability to our financial markets. I will do my best to represent my constituents with the proper level of oversight on these issues, but I heard loudly and clearly from my constituents in December that they are, as small business owners, at the end of their rope without access to capital and that community banks are not lending. So that is where I am spending my time and focus now, in urging both the Fed and Treasury to act, without passing legislation but act now to get recovery programs specifically working for community banks that need access to capital and for those small businesses that are the engine of economic growth for our economy.

While I know many of my colleagues think programs that came out of the TARP funding, such as the original TALF Program or even the Treasury Secretary's announced program in December, are things that have been in the works, I can tell my colleagues that my constituents started this debate in earnest with credit default swaps and the concern about large banks but are having a hard time, as I am, understanding the logic and the strategy that one day closes one of the largest banks in America and one of the largest banks in our State, Washington Mutual, wiping out 30,000 creditors and basically putting in jeopardy the retirement of many employees, and then 4 days later we pass a TARP bill. I believe the government picking winners and losers at that point in time was the wrong approach, and I advocated for an equity program.

But today my constituents want to know why it is that it was easy to figure out how, with loans and assets and the credit activity of the Fed, over \$1 trillion could be pumped into AIG at 100 cents on the dollar and yet small business owners in the State of Washington—and my guess is around the country—basically had capital cut from right under them.

When I think about what happened, it breaks my heart. To think about a company such as Vancouver's Columbia Gem, where the Bank of Clark County was shut down and assets moved over to another bank across the river, Umpqua Bank, that received TARP funds. But where was the help for the small businesses that had performing lines of credit at that bank? What happened to them? I will tell you what happened to them. Even though they had performing lines of credit, their funds were cut out right from under them. In fact, it forced the owner