

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
H.R. 4691

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4691, a 30-day extension of provisions which expire on Sunday, February 28—unemployment insurance, COBRA, flood insurance, Satellite Home Viewer Act, highway funding, SBA business loans and small business provisions of the American Recovery Act, SGR and poverty guidelines—received from the House and at the desk; that the bill be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. BUNNING. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the Senator has objected to extending unemployment benefits across the United States of America which will expire on Sunday night. He has also objected to extending COBRA benefits, which is health insurance for the unemployed people across America. This has been done regularly, now that we are in this recession, because millions of Americans are out of work. We know there are four or five, maybe even six people for every available job. Folks have depleted their savings, they run the risk of losing their homes, they are trying to keep their children in school, they are trying to provide the necessities of life, and the Senator from Kentucky objects to their having unemployment benefit checks.

What does it mean to me? Well, in the State of Illinois, it means that as of Sunday night, 15,000 people in my State will stop receiving unemployment benefits because of the objection of the Senator from Kentucky. It means that every week thereafter another 15,000 will lose their unemployment benefits. It is a harsh reality that many of these families have been looking for work for a long time.

The Senator has also objected to providing assistance to small business. The request I made would extend, for 30 days, provisions of the Small Business Act and the Recovery Act lending programs for small businesses. So what the Senator from Kentucky is doing, as of Sunday night, is shutting down the availability of credit for small businesses across America through this Small Business Administration program. In the midst of a recession, when we are told small businesses are the engine that will bring us out of this recession, when they are desperate for credit to keep their doors open, fami-

lies who have spent a lifetime building a small business are going to be denied an opportunity to borrow money through the Small Business Administration because of the objection of the Senator from Kentucky.

Let me say a word about COBRA. One of the first casualties of unemployment is health insurance. Sadly, many of these people are in a position where they do not qualify for Medicaid—health insurance for the poorest people. So they find themselves without health insurance for the first time because they are unemployed. We said, under President Obama's Recovery Act, we are going to help you pay for those premiums so you can continue to have health insurance for your family. That expires Sunday night too. The objection of the Senator from Kentucky means thousands of people across America will lose their health insurance. Because of his objection, they will lose it on Sunday night.

Workers who lose their jobs count on COBRA. And COBRA, frankly, is expensive. On average, COBRA coverage consumes 84 percent of unemployment benefits. It is not cheap. The average monthly unemployment benefit in Illinois is just over \$1,300. The average monthly family COBRA premium is over \$1,100. Through the Recovery Act, we said we would pick up 65 percent of that. Well, because of the objection of the Senator from Kentucky, if these people want to maintain their health insurance through unemployment, they are basically going to have to turn to savings or give it up.

Why? Why would we want to heap this kind of suffering on people who are already going through such misfortune? It isn't just Illinois that suffers, it is virtually every State. As of December, there were 221,000 people in Kentucky unemployed—10.7 percent of the Kentucky workforce—63,000 people in Louisville, 18,000 people in Lexington, 6,000 in Bowling Green, 5,500 in Elizabethtown, 5,000 in Owensboro. As they are desperately looking for work, many of these people are just getting by on unemployment checks. They are just trying to get by.

Last month, the State of Kentucky had the sharpest increase in unemployment claims in the country—in the entire United States—with 2,510 more claims than the month prior due to the automobile industry and manufacturing job cuts. Unfortunately, many of these people will lose their unemployment benefits in Kentucky because of the objection of their Senator. If Senator BUNNING has his way, more than 14,000 Kentucky residents will lose their unemployment assistance in March and 60,000 by the end of June.

Why? Why are we doing this to these families in Kentucky and Illinois and every State? Everyone acknowledges there is only one objection. Everyone in this Chamber acknowledges we are a caring and compassionate country, and we will, on an emergency basis, extend a helping hand to those who have lost their jobs.

Most Senators have left for the evening, but some have stayed on the floor. I have asked them if they would like to say a word on this issue. They are going to go home and tell their people back home there are going to be some terrible things happening as of Sunday night because of the objection of the Senator from Kentucky: 15,000 in my State, thousands in his own State and all across the country.

I am staying tonight to talk about this because, frankly, I don't think this ought to be business as usual. I don't think one Senator ought to be able to heap this kind of suffering and misfortune on people who are already struggling in this economy. If you wish to take it out on somebody, take it out on a colleague or a debate, but these are helpless people out of work.

Senator REID offered to the Senator from Kentucky an amendment—bring to the floor your theory on how to pay for this. He has a theory. He wants to pay for it with unexpended stimulus funds, as I understand it. He would have had his chance on the floor to make his case. He would have had a rollcall at the end of the day. He might have won, he might have lost, but he came to the floor yesterday and said I am not going to fall for that. I may lose this amendment and therefore I am going to object.

That is the nature of things. It is like when you pitch a ball game. Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. On the floor, sometimes you win—

Mr. BUNNING. Do you know about that?

Mr. DURBIN. I have never pitched a ball game. I never have. I am very proud of what you have done in your baseball career. But let me tell you, this is a wild pitch you are throwing tonight because this is a pitch that is hitting somebody in the stands, it is hitting an unemployed worker in Illinois. That is a wild pitch that should not have been thrown, Senator.

I believe when you look at what this is going to do across America, this is unforgivable that we would do this to these unemployed people.

For the Senator from Michigan, I yield for the purpose of a question.

Ms. STABENOW. I appreciate the Senator from Illinois, my friend, in his comments. I guess my question would relate to the State of Michigan because the Senator listed off some very important statistics. I wonder if the Senator is aware that in March, 62,000 people in the great State of Michigan, where we have the highest unemployment rate—we have a 14.6-percent unemployment rate, over 700,000 people right now unemployed, looking for work. These are people trying to keep a roof over their head, trying to keep food on their table, they are trying to hold things together as they are looking for a job. Yet we have 62,000 great people from Michigan who are going to lose their benefits in March. In fact, if this continues—and I know all of us are working very hard to get a year extension of

unemployment benefits. But I am wondering if my friend is aware that by May, 225,000 people in Michigan will be out of their benefits. These are people who are looking for work. We know for every one job available there are six people right now who are fighting to get that job. We have a jobs agenda. We are working very hard to make sure there are more jobs and partnering within the private sector.

But in the meantime, I am wondering if my friend would agree with the fact that this is a disaster, in fact. This is as much a disaster for families as anything else. We do emergency spending for floods and hurricanes and all kinds of disasters. For families, would my friend agree, this is as much of a disaster and warrants as much immediate attention as anything else we do?

Mr. DURBIN. I would say to the Senator from Michigan, this has been characterized as an emergency because it is an emergency. It has been acknowledged by the Budget Committee. It will be treated as an emergency spending situation. It is an extraordinary situation, just like a drought or flood or hurricane or tornado. These people have had their lives disrupted. We are trying to keep these families together. If there is ever a family value issue, this is it.

At this point I would like, on behalf of the people of Michigan and Illinois and Kentucky, Mr. President, to ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4691, a 30-day extension of provisions which expire on Sunday, February 28, unemployment insurance, COBRA, flood insurance, Satellite Home Viewer Act, highway funding, SBA, business loans and small business provisions of the American Recovery Act, SGR, and poverty guidelines received from the House and at the desk; that the bill be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BUNNING. The Senator from Kentucky objects.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I yield to the Senator from Rhode Island for purposes of a question.

Mr. REED. I am wondering if the Senator can confirm that we have routinely extended unemployment benefits over many decades, over both Republican and Democratic Presidents and Republican and Democratic Congresses, and we have always done it when the unemployment rate was at least above 7.4 percent. I think the lowest unemployment rate in which we suspended unemployment, extending benefits, was 7.4 percent. I say that because in Rhode Island we are up to 12.9 percent and there are other States that are equally disadvantaged.

This not only sort of upsets what I think is the logical way to proceed on this tonight, but it rejects decades and

decades of the common sense and common decency of the Congress.

I think and I hope you can confirm that understanding.

Mr. DURBIN. I say to the Senator from Rhode Island he is correct. In these extraordinary times when people have lost so many jobs, we set politics aside and we say we are going to help these people, whether it is victims of an economic disaster or a natural disaster. I cannot imagine if I were going home to Rhode Island, facing 12.9 percent. It is 11.1 in my home State of Illinois. You have a larger percentage of your population going through this. I am sure you have examples of friends, of folks who have already contacted your office who are at their wits end to figure out how to keep their families together.

I have seen it. I went to the unemployment offices in Chicago. I hope the Senator from Kentucky has visited with unemployed families in his State and understands how desperate they are. These are people who will do anything to get a job. They will do anything to get an interview.

They are trying desperately. Some of them are taking training courses, trying to figure out anything that might work to get a job.

They are really up against it when it comes to health insurance. It is one of the first casualties. This objection by the Senator from Kentucky will make it next to impossible for these families to have health insurance as a result of his objection.

I don't understand why we would do this. We are a caring people. On a bipartisan basis we step up as an American family when people are in need. I would not ask twice if someone came to me with a disaster in another State, because I know I have needed help in my own State. This is a real disaster. It is one that has affected virtually every State.

When you take a look at some of the provisions in this bill—incidentally, beyond unemployment—some people, particularly those living in rural areas, are affected by this Satellite Home Viewer Act which will not be extended because of the Senator's objection. It is a minor inconvenience for some, maybe more of an inconvenience for others. But why would we do this? Why would we object to the extension of these basic provisions in the law for 30 days? That is all we are asking for. I would think that is very basic and something we should be doing.

I also think the idea of helping the doctors who are treating Medicare patients is not an unreasonable thing to do. These are people who are taking care of the elderly in America, our parents and grandparents. This so-called SGR, the sustainable growth rate, or doc fix, is also one of the provisions which the Senator from Kentucky is objecting to.

It doesn't make sense. We want to make sure patients across America receive the care they are entitled to, that

Medicare patients can go visit their doctors and doctors can receive adequate compensation for doing that. I do not think that is an unreasonable thing for us to ask and I hope my colleagues who are on the floor here, if they have similar situations in their own State with unemployment, or if they are dealing with small businesses needing credit, would join me in this conversation on the floor about how unfair it is to be objecting to this extension of unemployment benefits.

I yield to the Senator from Missouri for purposes of a question.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, I am not prepared with some of the questions I would like to ask because, frankly, I am surprised. I would like to be able to ask you and compare the numbers in Missouri, the number of families who are going to find out tomorrow morning that even though we have appropriately extended unemployment benefits, that now we are not going to. I think they are going to be as surprised as I am. It is easy to get out of touch in this place. People are deferential to you around here. They open doors for you and bow and scrape. It is easy to forget what people are going through, what families are feeling right now, how hard it is for them to look to the future and still see that American dream on the horizon.

Really, 30 days of unemployment? Really? Have we gotten to that? Have we gotten to the point that that is going to be a political football? I think we have to take a hard look in the mirror, if it comes to this—30 days of unemployment insurance for families who want to work, who deserve to work, who are trying to work.

By the way, let me ask the Senator from Illinois, if the unemployment runs out, where do those families go? What happens then? Where do they go?

Mr. DURBIN. I would say to the Senator from Missouri that for many people there is almost no place to turn. In my hometown of Springfield, IL, there is something called township assistance, when you have no place to turn. It is a fraction of the money you would receive for unemployment. It would barely provide money for food for these people.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. I am assuming if they get to the point, then it is food stamps, right?

Mr. DURBIN. That is correct.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. There is other governmental assistance that is available to them. Maybe they will have to lose their homes. They would have to go to homeless shelters.

What I am trying to get at is there is a cost to this. It is not like all of a sudden the government is not going to get any cost if these people stop getting unemployment insurance. If they lose their health insurance, it is not as though they are going to not get treated in the emergency room if they get hit by a car on Monday. We are going to take care of them in the emergency room. We are all going to pay for it.

This is wrong. I hope the Senator sticks around and renews this motion for a while. I hope some of us stick around and help.

The American people need to realize how out of touch this place has gotten.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on behalf of unemployed people in Kentucky and Rhode Island and Michigan and Illinois and Missouri, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4691, a 30-day extension of provisions which expire on Sunday, February 28; unemployment insurance, COBRA, flood insurance, Satellite Home Viewer Act, highway funding, SBA business loans and small business loans and small business provisions of the American Recovery Act, SGR, and poverty guidelines received from the House and at the desk; that the bill be read three times, passed, and that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BUNNING. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator reserves the right to object.

Mr. BUNNING. It seems to me people have not been listening, particularly the Senator from Illinois. He has been through two of these with the leader. He heard the arguments on both sides. Unfortunately, he has a one-side-only view of this situation. I have offered the same COBRA, flood insurance, unemployment insurance, Satellite Home Viewing Act, highway funding, SBA loans, small business provisions—I have offered to do the same thing for the same amount of time. The only difference I have, and some of my good friends from the other side of the aisle, is that I believe we should pay for it. There is a right over the last 3 years of the Democratically controlled Congress. We have run up \$5 trillion in debt. There has to be a time to stop that.

We just passed, last week, pay-as-you-go. The first bill up—and I have said this before earlier—was the small business bill that just passed. Now, \$5 billion out of that bill was paid for; \$10 billion was not.

This is the second request after we passed the small business bill that the leader proposed. This also adds \$10 billion to the deficit. That is \$20 billion in two small bills.

What I have proposed is that we pay for it. My gosh, we have over \$400 billion in unspent stimulus money. I also worked, or tried to work, with the leader and his staff. I know he was busy at the White House, but I tried very hard to work with his staff to get other pay-fors and cut the time down to 2 weeks to make sure these people were taken care of.

I did not get any support from my good friends on the Democratic side of the aisle. I did not think it was fair to do what you are proposing to do, the Senator from Illinois. I will be here as long as you are here and as long as all

of those other Senators are here. I am going to object every time because you will not pay for this and you propose never to pay for it.

Eventually, by Tuesday, when we do have another vote, you will get a vote, and you will get this done. So I am trying to make a point to the people of the United States of America: We have a debt of \$14-plus trillion. I listened to the head of the Federal Reserve speaking to me in the Banking Committee today, and he looked straight at me and said the debt and the proposed budget of the Obama administration makes the debt unsustainable. We cannot sustain it.

I have a family of nine children and 40 grandchildren. I am as concerned as all of those good Senators sitting over there to pay for this and make sure we give these benefits to those people. But that is not the case. So it is their way or the highway, and I am not taking the highway.

Mr. DURBIN. Regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BUNNING. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. DURBIN. I wanted to give the Senator from Kentucky an opportunity to explain his position. I did not assert regular order until he had an opportunity to do so. But I would like to remind him, on November 4 of last year, he issued a press release entitled, "Bunning Supports Extension of Benefits for Kentucky's Unemployed." The legislation includes Senator BUNNING's net operating loss amendment. It passed by a vote of 98 to 0. And he said:

Kentucky has been hit hard by the current economic downturn. This legislation will lend a helping hand to working families across the Commonwealth who are in search of a job.

It was not paid for either. The point is, we are in the same recession. It has gotten worse in some areas of the country, particularly in the Senator's area of the country.

As I reported earlier, unemployment figures are growing in Kentucky. The situation is just as dire and just as serious.

I share the Senator's concern about our deficit situation. But virtually every reputable economist you will talk to will tell you, in the midst of a recession you need to insert into the economy economic activity and spending, and the money that flows through the fastest is unemployed benefits to those out of work because they spend it instantly. It goes right back into the economy.

This idea of somehow we are going to hold back on unemployment benefits and balance the budget on the backs of unemployed people in Illinois and Kentucky, you could not pick a worse strategy or a worse time to do it. The stories coming out of Kentucky and the stories coming out from Illinois are as graphic as can be.

Samantha, who lives in Kentucky, writes: I am in desperate need of help.

I have been unemployed since January 31, 2007, cannot find work anywhere. I was laid off after 10 years of employment. I was able to get 26 weeks of UI benefits. After these ran out, I thought I needed to take whatever job I could find. I took a job that I was told would be full time at minimum wage. I never got more than 20 hours a week. When I asked my employer, I was told I would get more hours. I was forced to quit due to not being able to afford childcare and transportation. I still cannot find work. I have been forced to sign up for government assistance. This is not enough to live on. I have three children.

Talk about 40 grandchildren. This lady has three children she is trying to support—"and we have already lost our home. Is there anything I can do to try and qualify for unemployment?"

I mean, for goodness' sakes, why would we want to make this deficit battle on the back of Samantha from Kentucky. Let's have this battle out on the budget resolution. Let's have it out on appropriations bills. But on unemployment benefits, for someone in this circumstance? That, to me, is pushing it too far. This is a national emergency. It should be treated as such.

I am supportive of the commission we voted for and only had 53 votes. But I believe it is a step in the right direction toward resolving our deficit difficulties. The majority leader has appointed me as a member of the Presidential Commission on the Deficit and Debt. It is not an easy assignment. I take it seriously. But I will tell you, if the belief is that we can somehow deny enough unemployment benefits to people to balance the budget, I do not want to see what America will look like. I cannot imagine what it will look like with Samantha and her three children if that becomes our national strategy.

Ms. STABENOW. Will the Senator yield for a question? I want to ask a question. Would the Senator from Illinois agree that we make choices here every day about what, in fact, we are going to do? And there is no question that the deficit is a huge issue. But I, along with you, have a reaction this evening listening to my friend from Kentucky, who is my friend. We have worked together on a number of different issues.

But to hear that somehow, when there has not been a concern about rising deficits when we were talking about tax benefits for the wealthiest Americans that did not have to be paid for, but now we are talking about those who find themselves, through no fault of their own, without a job, who are trying to hold it together in one of the worst economies certainly of my lifetime, and that somehow we are now—now—going to worry about balancing the budget and the deficit on the backs of the least of our brothers—I mean, that is really what is being talked about tonight. I find it outrageous that we would be having this kind of discussion.

Would my friend agree that, in fact, there are other choices? In fact, when we have the debate about extending the tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans, I want to hear the same debate and the same objection coming as is coming to people right now who are trying to hold it together for \$200 or \$300 a week and keep food on their table for their families.

Would my colleague agree?

Mr. DURBIN. I agree with the Senator from Michigan. I will tell you that because the Senator from Kentucky has noted our current national debt, \$14 trillion, I think it is worth a moment to explain that debt and how we reached that astronomic figure.

When President George W. Bush became President of the United States, we had a national debt of \$5 trillion, and we handed him a surplus—as President Clinton left office, he gave to President George W. Bush a surplus. At the end of the George W. Bush Presidency 8 years later, we were knocking on the door of \$12 trillion in debt. We had more than doubled the national debt in 8 years.

How did that happen? Some of it came from circumstances beyond President Bush's control. 9/11 devastated the economy, and that devastation cost us dearly in terms of jobs and services and businesses and revenue lost.

But conscious decisions were made by the George W. Bush administration to enact tax cuts in the midst of a war. That has never happened before in the history of the United States. It is counterintuitive. In addition to your ordinary budget of your country, you have a war budget on top of it. When you desperately need revenue to pay for that war and the ordinary expenses of your government, this administration, the previous administration under George W. Bush said: Let's give tax cuts to the wealthiest people in the midst of those two wars. They were voted on by the other side of the aisle, who supported the idea, driving us deeper in debt as a nation. And, of course, we waged the wars under President Bush without paying for them. That, too, added to our national debt.

Another \$400 billion was added to the debt with the Medicare prescription drug program, which was not paid for. So when this President came to office, he inherited not only a recession, but \$12 trillion in national debt brought on by the previous administration. The recession has taken and added another \$1 trillion to that debt in this last year, and we are trying to claw our way out of it.

Now, that is the reality and the history of how we reached this point of \$14 trillion in debt. To suggest it is the Democratic side of the aisle that does not take the deficit seriously, I would say, we produced a surplus under President Clinton, a surplus that was handed to President George W. Bush and quickly mushroomed into the biggest debt in the history of the United States of America.

Mr. SESSIONS. Would the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. DURBIN. I would be happy to yield for a question.

Mr. SESSIONS. The Senator from Illinois is very eloquent in his advocacy. But I think he is avoiding the question posed by Senator BUNNING, who simply says he is prepared tonight to fund the programs that you wish, to have them go forward.

As I understand it, is it not true he said that if you take this \$10 billion, I think it is, that is required to fund this program, and you fund it out of the \$400 billion unspent from the stimulus—a large part of it was supposed to be for this very purpose—that he would let the bill go tonight; that what he objects to is not doing that, and which, in effect, means—does it mean that the debt will be increased again tonight by another \$10 billion.

Mr. DURBIN. In response to the Senator from Alabama, there is one element that he has forgotten to include; that is, the majority leader, Senator REID, offered to the Senator from Kentucky a vote, an up-or-down vote, as to whether these unemployment benefits and COBRA benefits would be paid for out of stimulus funds. He rejected it. He said: I do not want to agree to that because I may lose the vote. And he may.

The Senator from Kentucky would not agree to a vote on that question. He said: I may lose it. Well, he may. He may win it. But the fact is, he would not agree to a vote. He said: You have to put in this unanimous consent request a provision that says this would be paid for.

Now, I would say to the Senator from Alabama, I understand that the remaining stimulus funds, most of which are already committed and obligated, will be spent this year on projects in Alabama, Illinois, and Kentucky to create jobs. So the money we take out of that stimulus fund now unspent is money that will not be spent to create jobs across America.

Now that, to me, would be a misfortune because we want to create jobs. I will concede to you this money for unemployment will add to the deficit, as previous emergency spending for unemployment has as well. What we are asking for tonight has been the ordinary care of business, which the Senator from Kentucky has supported as recently as November.

Mr. SESSIONS. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. DURBIN. I yield only for the purposes of a question.

Mr. SESSIONS. We are well aware that the Democrats have a sizable majority in this body, and if the Democratic leadership, including yourself, is committed to not paying for this and taking care of this appropriation by borrowing additional money from the world on which we pay interest, then it is likely to be a futile act to have this vote.

He is asking you to step to the plate, as I understand it, is he not, and say:

Join with me and let's pay for it, either through the stimulus or some other way, and let's not keep adding debt because that is what the American people are asking. And I ask you, are you not hearing that from your constituents?

Mr. DURBIN. I am hearing from my constituents that they want jobs. They are out of work. Many of them are unemployed. And I would say to the Senator from Alabama, we may have 59 votes, but you know as well as I do that 60 votes is the coin of the realm in this body.

You also know that with very little parliamentary effort, you can drag out this whole question through motions to proceed and cloture and filibusters. It can go on literally for days if not weeks.

I ask the Senator from Alabama, why would we do that in a situation where these people desperately need help for unemployment assistance and for health insurance? Why do we want to heap this misery on them?

We said to the Senator from Kentucky: You can have a vote. You may win. You may lose. You will have your day on the floor of the Senate. He said: No. Unless you accept my way, go to the highway. Did I hear that earlier? As far as I am concerned, that is not a reasonable approach.

I have called up amendments on the floor and lost them. But the point is, you make your best case, and the Senate decides whether to support your position.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank the Senator from Illinois for allowing me to ask those questions. I think the Senator from Kentucky is speaking on behalf of the conscience of a lot of Americans, a majority of Americans, if they heard this debate. He is doing it as a matter of principle. I know he has no desire to see people not receive unemployment compensation. He is willing to support that. He simply is saying that enough is enough.

Mr. BUNNING. I have a question for the Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I yield for a question.

Mr. BUNNING. The press release you read from was about an unemployment insurance extension that was fully paid for. So don't compare apples to oranges.

Mr. DURBIN. I will verify that. I was given information it was not. If I am incorrect, I will state so. But we have extended unemployment benefits repeatedly and not paid for them.

Mr. BUNNING. I understand that. I have voted for that occasionally. But this one you read from was fully paid for.

Mr. DURBIN. I will check on that. If the Senator is correct, I will make that point in the record.

I would like to notify the Senator from Kentucky about Joetta from Ferguson, who wrote:

I have been laid off since October 31, 2008. When I was laid off, I lost my health insurance coverage. The COBRA plan offered cost so much, I could not keep the insurance. I

was told if business picks up in the spring, I could get called back to work. However, since I was laid off from the concrete company, there have been two other office personnel laid off this past January, so I doubt I will be called back to work. I am 58 years old. I have a high school education. I am finding it extremely difficult to find a job, even though I apply for work and am registered with the local unemployment office. I am not one to seek after handouts. However, I have worked all my adult life and have paid taxes as most everyone else has. And I do not expect favors from anyone. I am completely down and out and can hardly pay bills, buy food, et cetera, let alone medical expenses. My husband has insurance through his employment but the cost to add me onto his plan is so high, we simply cannot afford it. Also, he makes \$10 per hour, so it isn't as if we have an abundance of money to live on. And I am a very economic person.

It is hard to imagine why we would say no to unemployment benefits for Joetta from Ferguson under the circumstances. If we want to fight this budget and deficit battle, why would we hurt her in the crossfire of the conversation? Why wouldn't we extend these unemployment benefits for her and thousands like her in Illinois and Kentucky and other States?

Mr. MERKLEY. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. DURBIN. I am happy to yield to the Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. First, I would like to know, as we stand here tonight, have we paid for the tax cuts handed out to the wealthiest Americans?

Mr. DURBIN. If you are talking about the tax cuts under President George W. Bush, no.

Mr. MERKLEY. I am a new Senator. I have been here just over a year. But I don't recall, in January of 2009 when I arrived, that any Member stood up and said: I am going to hold up everything right now until we pay for the tax cuts for the wealthiest. Did that happen in January? Did I miss that?

Mr. DURBIN. No, it did not happen. I don't think it has ever happened. It is an indication that when it comes to giving relief to those who are in a pretty luxurious state, we don't pay for it.

Mr. MERKLEY. It sounds as if the Senator shares my memory, because I don't remember it in January 2009. I don't remember it in February 2009. I don't remember it in March 2009. I don't remember it in April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December, or January of this year or this month.

I am confused. I am confused that the principle has been put forward tonight that there is a reason to hold up a program that hasn't been paid for. Even if we haven't been here late into the evening having a discussion about paying for the tax cuts, are there Members of this body who have held up affairs over the last 14 months, saying it is time to take care of paying for the tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans?

Mr. DURBIN. No. As a matter of fact, there are some who are trying to extend estate tax benefits to even the wealthiest of the wealthy and to give

them additional assistance and argue that tax cuts should not be paid for.

Mr. MERKLEY. So the principle being presented tonight is that if you are fortunate to be among the wealthiest Americans, we will give you additional benefits and it doesn't matter if we pay for them. But if you are among the most unfortunate Americans who have lost their jobs—and when you lose your job, you might well have lost your health care that went with your job—if you are struggling, then it matters that it is paid for immediately.

Mr. DURBIN. I agree with the Senator. It is a double standard, and it is one that benefits those who are wealthy as opposed to those who are out of work.

Mr. MERKLEY. It is a double standard that bothers me a great deal.

We in this Chamber are fortunate enough to receive a paycheck. But back home, I have a tremendous number of families, working families in Oregon who are not going to get a paycheck. I have unemployment in Crook County of 16.8 percent. I have unemployment in Douglas County of 14.9 percent. In Harney County, it is 15.5 percent. In Deschutes County, it is 14.5 percent; Jefferson County, 14.1 percent; Lake County, 12.9 percent; Josephine County, 13.6 percent. These are counties where more than one in eight people is out of work.

Am I to say to my good citizens back home that if you are among the most fortunate, we will give you additional benefits, unpaid for, but if you are down and out, it is just too bad, we are going to hold up everything and say we are not going to help you?

Mr. DURBIN. That is exactly what has happened with this objection, this objection to extend unemployment benefits for 30 days. That is all we are asking for, 30 days.

Mr. MERKLEY. So if I understand right, there is the complete opportunity to have a debate 30 days from now, but we could have had the debate tonight because there could have been a vote tonight. It was offered but turned down. There will be opportunities throughout this next month, but we are going to cut people off at the worst moment here because one Senator says: I am happy about unfunded gifts to the most fortunate, but I am determined not to help people who are down and out.

Mr. DURBIN. I would say to the Senator from Oregon, that is exactly what has happened. When it came to the tax cuts, they weren't paid for. They went primarily to the wealthiest people in America. Now unemployment benefits not paid for are objected to.

Mr. MERKLEY. I am deeply disturbed that one could be so disconnected from the challenges of working Americans as to have us in the situation we are in at this moment.

Mr. DURBIN. I would say to the Senator from Oregon, here is a comment from Sharon, who is also from Kentucky. She writes:

I have worked since the age of 15. I hold two MA degrees and have worked a full and part-time job for 15 years. I entered the private sector until my position was eliminated approximately 14 months ago. Gas prices almost prevented my seeking employment very far from home. At 55 years of age, I never thought I would be without health care. I never considered that I would have difficulty finding a job. By the way, my spouse was also employed by a company which was downsized and sold twice within 1 year. He is also unemployed. We live in Kentucky which is a more rural part of America. Our state and county typically have a high unemployment rate as well. Extension of unemployment insurance would be a lifeline.

That lifeline has been cut off by the objection of the Senator from Kentucky.

I yield to the Senator from Vermont for purposes of a question.

Mr. SANDERS. I thank the Senator for yielding. We have talked about the fact that unemployment today and economic suffering is probably greater than at any time since the Great Depression of the 1930s. But I wonder if the Senator from Illinois is aware that the problem is not just high unemployment but long-term unemployment; that, in fact, I believe we have never seen in modern history a length of time in which people are unemployed as is currently the case. Would the Senator concur that what we are looking at now is a modern tragedy in terms of the length of time people are experiencing unemployment?

Mr. DURBIN. I would agree with the Senator from Vermont. You have to go back 70 or 80 years to the Great Depression to see this long a period of unemployment.

Mr. SANDERS. I want to ask another question. My recollection is that a number of months ago there was a vote here on the floor of the Senate regarding the repeal of the estate tax. My understanding is that vote to repeal a significant part of the estate tax would have benefited, as I recall, the top three-tenths of 1 percent of the population; 99.7 percent of the people would not have benefited. I could be wrong, but my understanding is that if that legislation, that bill, that amendment had passed, it would have cost our government about \$1 trillion in a 10-year period, \$1 trillion in benefits to the top three-tenths of 1 percent.

Can my friend from Illinois remind me as to how many Republicans voted against giving \$1 trillion in tax breaks to the top three-tenths of 1 percent that was not paid for?

Mr. DURBIN. I would say to the Senator from Vermont, I do not recall, but I think he might recall. Does he?

Mr. SANDERS. On my suspicion—I won't swear to it—I don't recall that any Republican did not. I may be wrong on this, but my recollection is that all Republicans voted to repeal the estate tax, voted for that legislation. Some Democrats did as well.

But I find it remarkable, picking up on the point the Senator from Oregon made a moment ago, here we were talking about \$1 trillion over a 10-year

period to benefit the top three-tenths of 1 percent. I don't recall hearing anybody saying: Hey, we have a huge national debt. We can't afford another trillion dollars. But somehow, when it comes to desperate people who are hanging on by their fingernails, trying to keep their families afloat in the most serious economic moment since the Great Depression of the 1930s, somehow, right now that has to be paid for. We have to pay for \$10 billion, but somehow you don't have to pay for \$1 trillion over a 10-year period. I don't quite understand that. Maybe my friend from Illinois can elucidate.

Mr. DURBIN. I would say in response, I do not understand it. It is hard for me to follow the logic that we need to reward those who are the most comfortable in America and punish those who are suffering. That is what this objection does. By denying unemployment benefits and COBRA benefits to those out of work, it literally makes their lives more difficult. Yet many of the same people have argued that these tax breaks for the wealthy should be considered as part of our future, even if they are not paid for. I don't follow the logic behind that position in any way whatsoever.

Mr. SANDERS. For the record, the sum was \$350 billion over 10 years, not \$1 trillion. The trillion would have been the complete repeal of the estate tax. But nonetheless, \$350 billion benefiting the top three-tenths of 1 percent is a sizable chunk of cash. I am somewhat amazed that nobody at that point was terribly worried about how that was going to be paid for.

I thank the Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I yield to the Senator from Pennsylvania for a question.

Mr. CASEY. I don't know if the Senator has seen this, but this is the National Employment Law Project, February 2010. One of the columns highlights the total number of individuals exhausting their unemployment benefits in the month of March. I don't know if the Senator from Illinois quoted this number earlier. I don't think he did. But the total for the month of March in Illinois would be 65,431 people. In my State of Pennsylvania, the total would be not quite that high but 62,599 people.

That leads me to my second question. I had the opportunity a couple weeks ago to sit with 8 of the 560,000 people in my State who are out of work. In Pennsylvania, that 560,000 adds up to 8.9 percent of the workforce, but it is an incredibly high number—maybe not a record but very close. Those eight individuals were like every one of the people in this country who has lost their job, not through anything they did. Through no fault of their own, they are out of work.

I would ask the Senator from Illinois about what he has seen and heard from individuals he has sat down with in Illinois who have lost their jobs and are going to job centers and places such as that to fill out unemployment forms,

fill out job applications. I would ask you about that.

(Mr. MERKLEY assumed the Chair.)

Mr. DURBIN. I say to the Senator from Pennsylvania, in response to the question, through the Chair, that I have been to these unemployment centers in Chicago and downstate, and I am always heartened by the fact that these people are just not going to give up. They really keep trying. But you can tell that many of them are beaten down. Some of them tell me about how many times they now apply on the Internet for any job openings and they do not even get a response. They consider it a victory just to get an interview or a response, and they just keep trying every single day. Meanwhile, they are trying to keep their families together, and the only lifeline they have is unemployment insurance checks. It is not a lot of money: \$1,100 a month. Imagine trying to live on it. It is a very meager amount of money, particularly for someone who is used to a larger paycheck and more comfort in life. Why would we cut off the \$1,100 a month to these people at this moment in time when the economy is so weak? I do not understand why we would object to providing unemployment benefits to these people, whether they are in Pennsylvania or Kentucky or Illinois. In my way of thinking, many of these folks are in this situation through no fault of their own, and they are trying their best to turn their lives around and it is not an easy circumstance for any of them.

Mr. CASEY. The ones I have met in that—they call it a career link, a job center—of those eight individuals, all but one—but maybe even the one—of those eight people were in their fifties, sixties, or seventies. In most instances—probably five out of the eight, maybe six out of the eight—they had never lost their job before; they had never had to depend upon unemployment insurance, food stamps, any kind of help. In fact, one woman said she felt ashamed that she had to apply for food stamps. She had never had to be that reliant on anything. Another woman by the name of Debbie said to me: We just want to get back to work. We don't want to be in this condition. We want to get back to work. So there was no complaining.

But I want to ask the Senator, as well, you referred earlier to another part of this discussion, which is that we focus on those who need this unemployment insurance—and we are talking here just about a 30-day extension; we are not talking about providing this for years or a long period of time—but the Senator talked about the economic impact of the spending of these dollars. I do not know if the Senator is familiar with what Mark Zandi, the economist, talked about. I do not know if the Senator is familiar with that. Let me just ask the Senator that.

Mr. DURBIN. I say to the Senator from Pennsylvania, I am aware of that economist, and I am aware the CBO re-

cently reported that the one thing we can do to generate more economic activity in our economy that is better than anything else is unemployment assistance. It is No. 1 on their list. They talked about tax credits for new jobs in small businesses, but No. 1 was unemployment assistance. So as we cut back on unemployment assistance, the economy starts to go into a stall. We are not putting the money back into the economy; we are pulling it out at a time when the Federal Reserve is trying to keep interest rates low to generate more economic activity and move us forward to better employment. We are pushing against it. We are taking unemployment assistance out because of the objection of the Senator from Kentucky—one Senator who has objected. So from the economist viewpoint, we are doing exactly the opposite of what we should be doing to get this economy moving again.

Mr. CASEY. Let me add that the reference to the Congressional Budget Office—that has been the referee or the arbiter of what is used as a number for health care, what protections are for spending—I heard the summary of that same report on the House side at a Joint Economic Committee meeting.

But the reference I made earlier is a very similar analysis made by Mark Zandi. Mark Zandi is an economist from moodys.com. He happened to be an adviser to JOHN MCCAIN's Presidential campaign, so he is not some partisan in this debate. But he said, going back a year ago, when we were debating the recovery bill—whether to enact it or not—he said that if you spend \$1 on unemployment insurance, you get I think it is more than \$1.60 back, somewhere in the \$1.60 to \$1.70 range. So this is not only a question of how we help people who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own; the secondary benefit here is it can help people who are out of work and need a stimulated economy, need an economy that is jump-started by the spending we would provide through unemployment insurance. So it makes no sense.

As the Senator from Illinois said earlier, there are lots of ways to make the argument that our friend from Kentucky is making, but this is not the time or the place, when all we are talking about is a 30-day extension of unemployment insurance for people who, through no fault of their own, have lost their jobs. It makes no sense. And as I look at these numbers in Pennsylvania of 62,599 people losing or will lose, if he prevails, their unemployment insurance in the month of March, it makes no sense.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Senator from Pennsylvania.

I yield to the Senator from Alaska for a question.

Mr. BEGICH. I thank the Senator very much.

I have a couple questions in regard to the bill. I will probably have more later, but, first, remind me and the

people who are watching what the unemployment rate for our country is today.

Mr. DURBIN. Currently, on a national basis?

Mr. BEGICH. On a national basis.

Mr. DURBIN. I believe it is now just slightly below 10 percent on a national basis. In my State, it is still over 11 percent.

Mr. BEGICH. In your State, it is 11 percent?

Mr. DURBIN. Yes.

Mr. BEGICH. In my State, it is 9 percent.

I will lay out a couple points. In my State, the 9 percent, which is one of the highest in years for us, one of the highest numbers ever in a long time, but when you look at it by region—and I am curious if in your State it has similar impacts like this—for example, 9 percent is a lot, no question about it, but in the Aleutians East Borough in Alaska it is 20.2 percent; in Bethel it is 14.8 percent; in Aleutians West Borough it is 13.7 percent; in the Northwest Arctic Borough it is 12.89 percent; in Kenai Borough it is 12.3 percent; in Mat-Su it is 10.4 percent. Those are examples. The number is high for our State. It is one of the highest in many years. But it really does not tell the whole story.

I ask the Senator, do you have similar circumstances that are regionally higher than the average for your State?

Mr. DURBIN. I say to the Senator from Alaska that Rockford in the northern end of my State was as high as 15 percent. You know, it does not tell the whole story because, as they say, some people get discouraged when they are out of work and they do not get counted on these rolls anymore. So the actual unemployment rate is much higher. These people will not be affected by our action tonight because they are not in the program, they are not receiving unemployment assistance. But the actual misery index of people unemployed over a long period of time is even higher.

Mr. BEGICH. They have given up. They have lost faith.

Mr. DURBIN. They have lost faith and they have stopped trying.

I would say to the Senator from Alaska, when I look at the State of Kentucky, here is Allen County with 13.9 percent unemployment; Bath County, 15.7 percent unemployment; Carroll County, 13.8 percent; Clay County, 13.3 percent unemployment; Cumberland County, 13.4 percent; Edmonson County, 14.3 percent; Elliott County, 13.0 percent; Estill County, 12.7 percent; Fleming County, 12.4 percent; Floyd County, 12.3 percent; Fulton County, 14 percent; Gallatin County, 13 percent; Garrard County, 12 percent; Grant County, 11.2 percent; Graves County, 10.6 percent; Grayson County, 16 percent—one of the highest; Green County, 12 percent; Hardin County, 10.1 percent; Harlan County, 12.5 percent; Jackson County—this is even higher—17.8 percent.

On this page, as I look through here, the highest in Kentucky appears to be—I may mispronounce this—Magoffin County, 21.4 percent unemployment in that one county; Marion County, 11.8 percent. The list goes on and on. McCreary County, 14.1 percent; Meade County, 14.3 percent; Menifee County, 17.5 percent; Metcalfe County, 14.4 percent; Morgan County, 15.1 percent; Powell County, 16.9 percent; Trigg County, 16.5 percent; Wolfe County, 15.6 percent.

The Senator from Alaska is right. The average does not tell the story. There will be pockets in Kentucky and Illinois and Alaska with much higher unemployment. So when we cut off the benefits because of the objection from the Senator from Kentucky, as of Sunday night some of these counties will be hit harder than others. There is no question about that.

Mr. BEGICH. I will ask if I can read something toward a question. As you drill down—that is what we are doing here a little bit, and your answer to my question is what I wanted to ask to make sure I was clear on that. It is not just the average that we should always be thinking about, but how do we drill down?

When I got back from my break, I received this e-mail. I am sure you have similar e-mails. That is going to be my question. What kind of responses have you gotten from those who are unemployed?

Here is one from my State:

... I implore you as your first order of business upon your return from the snow—

Which I thought was very interesting—

and recess to extend the emergency unemployment benefits through the end of 2010 that are due to expire on the 28th of Feb. Thank you.

He was thanking me in advance for something this gentleman believes we will do because it is right. This gentleman is 46 years old, a professional in the legal field. He had applied for over 30 different jobs. He has had two interviews. He is still unable to get a job. He is Jeff from Eagle River. I will not use his last name. He did not authorize me to do that. But just reading this letter tells me, why are we not doing this?

I am a new Member. Like the Senator from Oregon, I have been here a little over a year. I have the same question he had on, literally, the \$1 trillion that was unfunded, given to the richest of the rich. It has never been revoked or changed, but it was funded by whom? Not by this body but on the backs of people like my son who is 7½ years old, who will pay for the richest of the rich. I do not call it a tax cut; I call it a tax scheme. To me, that is outrageous when I think about it.

So I associate my comments with those of the Senator from Oregon. As a new Member, this is not necessarily new to me, but being here in the Chamber and watching this process over the last year and a half, this, to me, seems so simple. These are the people who are

hurting the most. Yet when it comes time to do a small item of a \$10 billion extension to allow them to make sure, come Monday, they know they can provide for their family, as this gentleman here who is 46 years old—it is just shocking to me and unbelievable.

I am assuming the Senator from Illinois receives these same kinds of letters every day from people who are stressed and concerned. And they are not out there looking for a handout; they are looking at someone in our position to assist them in this unbelievable recession we are facing. Is that similar to what the Senator receives?

Mr. DURBIN. It is exactly what I have run into. Here is a letter from a man from Yorkville, IL, who wrote me:

On bailout after bailout for businesses, my tax dollars have been used to save companies that should have planned better in the first place. Now I am unemployed—not because I made some poor decisions like AIG or Citigroup, but because in today's economy, the company I worked for folded. . . .

If the Senate cannot reach an agreement . . . to extend unemployment, myself, my wife, and our two young children will have nowhere to live other than our car. How about a bailout for those of us Americans that have worked all our lives and now cannot get a decent job?

I am begging you to stand up in front of the Senate . . . and demand that congress work harder for those of us who put all of you in office. The next time you need our votes, hopefully the 10% of unemployed Americans will not have had their cars repossessed so that we may make it to our local polling places.

Well, he kept a sense of humor in his misfortune. But this is an example of a man who thought he had a good job and a good future who now is contemplating living in his car. And now we are saying, because of the objection of one Senator, that we are not going to provide unemployment benefits to thousands of people in similar situations as of Sunday night. Why we are doing this to these poor people at this moment in time is impossible to explain.

Mr. BEGICH. I thank the Senator. I have other questions, but I know there are others who are standing to ask questions. But I have a question on the small business fund and the Medicare component, which are vitally important to keep our economy moving. I will withhold and ask those questions in a few minutes.

Mr. DURBIN. I yield to the Senator from Rhode Island for a question.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I thank the Senator. I very much appreciate the Senator from Illinois yielding for a question. If the Senator would not mind a series of questions, the first question has to do with, I guess I would say the sense with which we on this side of the aisle should receive the protestations of intense concern about the deficit that come from the other side of the aisle, and it relates back to when the previous Republican administration first took office.

As the Senator from Illinois mentioned, the last Democratic administration left an annual budget in surplus and a nation that had a \$5 trillion

debt. But my recollection is that in addition to a nation in annual budget surplus, what President Clinton also left the Republican administration that followed was a budget trajectory projected by the nonpartisan professional Congressional Budget Office to eliminate the national debt of the United States of America. We would be a debt-free nation if the Democratic policies of President Clinton had been followed according to the nonpartisan, professional Congressional Budget Office. If I additionally recall, there were actually economic debates that were provoked by that, wondering whether it was actually a good idea for the Nation to be, for the first time since President Andrew Jackson, debt free.

So my question is, Is it not true that more than just an annual budget surplus was left to the Republicans by the Democrats last time, but what was left to them also was a budget trajectory that would have made this Nation debt free during President Bush's term had he extended those Democratic policies?

Mr. DURBIN. The Senator from Rhode Island is correct. The Senator from Kentucky has talked about the Nation's deficit and debt, and he should realize that when President Clinton left office in January of 2001, the national budget was in better shape than it had been in a generation.

In fiscal year 2000, the final year in which President Clinton had full responsibility for the national budget, our Nation's budget surplus was \$236 billion—budget surplus. That year, the debt held by the public declined for the third consecutive year. As President Clinton left office, budget surpluses were projected to continue throughout the next 10 years. CBO, in its January 2001 budget outlook, projected surpluses of \$5 trillion for 2001 through 2010, including nearly \$800 billion in 2010 alone. Those surpluses were so large, as the Senator from Rhode Island indicated, that the Congressional Budget Office told us the debt held by the public would be entirely paid off by 2006.

Fast forward 8 years, at the end of George W. Bush's Presidency, that administration, and the national debt had climbed from \$5 trillion that he inherited to more than double that amount.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. The question I was asking is, Is it not fair to ascribe to that Republican administration and its policies the responsibility for more than just the difference between \$5 trillion and \$12 trillion? Because if those policies hadn't changed, according to the nonpartisan, neutral, professional Congressional Budget Office, during the term of President Bush, we would have actually been a debt-free nation and, therefore, responsibility for the entire Federal debt that was inherited by President Obama could fairly be said to be the responsibility of the policies from the other side of the aisle.

Mr. DURBIN. The Senator from Rhode Island is correct.

I don't know how the Senator from Kentucky voted when it came to the tax cuts for the wealthy. I don't know, so I can't presume to state it on the floor. I don't know if he voted for the annual budgets to prolong the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan without paying for them. I don't know how he voted on the Medicare prescription drug benefit that was not paid for, at least the \$400 billion cost. I will acknowledge he was correct that the unemployment I referred to in November was paid for. I want that clear on the RECORD and I stand corrected and acknowledge it to the Senator from Kentucky. But I would say that his—

Mr. BUNNING. Will the Senator from Illinois yield?

Mr. DURBIN. I will yield after one more question from the Senator from Rhode Island. But I would say, when it came to his party position, tonight we hear this idea of fiscal conservatism, strict spending, punish those who are unemployed, take money away from those who have been out of work in order to bring down this budget deficit. But for 8 years, under President George W. Bush, we certainly didn't hear this sentiment expressed when it came to people who were so well off across our country.

I yield to the Senator from Rhode Island for a question.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. In evaluating this concern about the deficit, we have just determined that the policies of the other side of the aisle contributed to virtually all the national debt we have inherited. Then let's look to the situation now because I think we understand we have to fix this deficit problem.

The distinguished Senator from Illinois earlier mentioned a vehicle for trying to do this, which was the establishment of a statutory deficit commission. My recollection is, the votes were inadequate for that, in significant part because on the Republican side of the aisle, seven of our colleagues whose names were on that plan as cosponsors of it voted against the bill that they had cosponsored for a mechanism that would potentially, at least, have provided a vehicle for resolving some of our deficit concerns.

My question is, Is that also the recollection of the Senator from Illinois? And how, in the light of this debate about the budget deficit and the fact that the budget deficit is so important, it is worth forcing honest, hard-working—when they can find work—Americans into their cars to sleep, as the Senator from Illinois has said, out of their homes, into penury. Why is it not important enough for our friends on the other side to support legislation of which they were cosponsors, and what was the motivation for that?

Mr. DURBIN. I would say in response to the Senator, for those who have not been following the debate from the beginning, tonight we are speaking to the fact that the Senator from Kentucky, Mr. BUNNING, is objecting to extending

unemployment benefits for 30 days in the United States to those who are out of work and extending COBRA benefits which help to pay for health insurance for 30 days, in addition to several other items, and has stated his reason is because of his concern about the budget deficit.

I don't know how the Senator from Kentucky voted on this commission, but I do remember it well because Senator KENT CONRAD, the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, came to me and said he had worked out an agreement with Senator JUDD GREGG, a Republican, that they would try to create a commission which would take a look at our national deficit and make recommendations to Congress which we would then have to vote on. It was controversial, that is for sure.

When it was called for a vote, it ended up with, I believe, 53 votes and fell short of passage because 7 Republican Senators who had cosponsored the measure initially voted against it, cosponsors who voted against it, and it included the Republican minority leader. Their determination to deal with the deficit and the debt withered away and disappeared when they had a chance to vote for it on the floor. I don't know how the Senator from Kentucky voted.

So here is a chance for the Republicans to join the Democrats to deal with the deficit and debt, and they walked away. Seven of them turned their back on a bill they had cosponsored and walked away from it.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, with the indulgence of the Senator from Kentucky, if I may ask my final question. If we have established that it was the Bush administration and Republican policies that created virtually all the national debt we now carry, and if we have established that when the mechanism that many believe would be the best vehicle to address the deficit was abandoned by our friends on the other side in significant measure, even those who had cosponsored it, thus preventing it from passing, what am I supposed to tell Carol Thomasian from North Providence? She is unemployed. She is a Rhode Islander. She has worked hard all her life. She went to work first as a teenager. She eventually got married. She started a family. She got a college degree to increase her earning potential. She bought a home. Her family lived in the home. She did everything right, pursuing the American dream.

Two years ago, when the Rhode Island economy collapsed—and it collapsed in Rhode Island sooner than in other States; we have been in a recession for a long time now—she was laid off from her job as a construction project manager, and she hasn't been able to find work since. She is struggling to keep her family together. She is a single mom now. She is raising a 12-year-old son and a 15-year-old daughter. She has all those responsibilities of teenager parenting. She is also

trying to care for her disabled mother. She has a bachelor's degree in business administration. She has an associate's degree in architecture. She is a capable, trained, hard-working woman. Because she is out of work, her car has been repossessed, making it so much more difficult to try to find work, and it is unemployment insurance that is keeping her family together. This will cut 309 Rhode Islanders in our small State right off, in another few months it will cut up to 1,500 people right off.

How am I supposed to explain to them this principle that they need to suffer because of our budget deficit, with a party that is forcing that suffering on them and that did more to run up our national deficit than ever and that has obstructed the vehicle that would have started the work to fix the deficit and is absolutely silent about the deficit when millionaires and multimillionaires and billionaires are given tax breaks? How can I explain that? What do I tell her?

Mr. DURBIN. I would say to the Senator from Rhode Island, there is no explanation because it doesn't make sense. You certainly couldn't explain to this woman who has worked so hard throughout her entire life and now faces this misfortune that we are heaping additional misfortune on her because of this objection to extending unemployment benefits. In the State of Rhode Island—I know it is small in comparison to so many others—the Senator from Rhode Island is likely to meet some of these 309 people or hear from them when their unemployment benefits are cut off. I am sure my office will hear too. I will not know how to explain to them that the Senator from Kentucky has objected to a 30-day extension of unemployment benefits. If we are going to fight this war on the deficit and debt, why fight it on the backs of unemployed people such as the one we have just heard described in the State of Rhode Island?

Mr. BUNNING. Would the Senator from Illinois give me a chance to respond? You have had the floor for an hour and a half.

Mr. DURBIN. I would be happy to yield for a question from the Senator.

Mr. BUNNING. A question. OK. If all the things that have been said on the other side are true, all of the programs you have talked about could have been extended and for much longer periods if Senator REID, your leader, had not blown up the bipartisan jobs bill agreed to by the chairman of the Finance Committee and the ranking member, Senator BAUCUS and Senator GRASSLEY, and jammed through his own bill which we talked about; and all the spending forces of that compromise, of those programs that you are talking about, were paid for in that bill. Explain that to the American people.

Mr. DURBIN. I would be happy to. The Senator from Kentucky has not stated it 100 percent accurately.

Mr. BUNNING. Oh, he has.

Mr. DURBIN. Because in the original proposal from the Finance Committee,

the unemployment benefits were extended for 3 months, as I understand it. The tax extenders—

Mr. BUNNING. They were paid for.

Mr. DURBIN. Let me explain. There was a source of revenue for the bill, but it wasn't enough to pay for the entire bill. The source of revenue was enough for those who wanted to say: Well, this will pay for unemployment, to point to it; and those who wanted to say: No, it pays for another part of the bill. So it did not pay for the entire bill.

Mr. BUNNING. That is your interpretation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois has the floor.

Mr. DURBIN. I yielded for a question and I answered the question, but I will yield for another question.

Mr. BUNNING. It has been brought up during this debate that the balanced budget amendment and the balanced budget is a product of the Clinton administration. The Senator from Illinois knows that to be false.

Mr. DURBIN. No, I don't know that to be false.

Mr. BUNNING. Well, do you know anything about how the balanced budget bill was brought to the floor of the House of Representatives?

Mr. DURBIN. I would say to the Senator from Kentucky I was serving in the Senate.

Mr. BUNNING. I was serving.

Mr. DURBIN. I will tell my colleague what has been said on the floor and which I stand behind; that is, the fact that when President William Clinton left office, he left a budget in balance and in surplus.

Mr. BUNNING. Yes.

Mr. DURBIN. I yield for a further question.

Mr. BUNNING. That is only because Representative John Kasich and the Budget Committee that he chaired in the House, for 3 years in a row, brought a balanced budget bill to the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives. I was a member of that Budget Committee.

The first 2 years, the Clinton administration rejected the balanced budget bill. In the third year, instead of getting run over by the train, President William Jefferson Clinton got on the train and agreed that the balanced budget bill should be passed. Then the Senate concurred and we balanced the budget. It took a little bit, but we did it. That is where the surplus came from—a Republican's idea, John Kasich, of Ohio, who brought a balanced budget to the floor.

Mr. DURBIN. If that is a question—

Mr. BUNNING. The questions I have are—I wanted to straighten out my good friend from Rhode Island.

Mr. DURBIN. If that was a question, it is clear that there was bipartisan ship, and we can use a little bit more of that around here.

Mr. BUNNING. Even the fact that our President—somebody who talked about extending tax cuts to the wealthy and talked about extending

tax cuts, and the fact that nobody on the floor of this Senate—explain to me, with 60 Democrats and 40 Republicans, why someone on the Democratic side of the aisle didn't make a bill that would rescind those tax cuts? Your President—our President—wants to extend 85 percent of those same tax cuts without paying for them. He has a bill in his budget to do just that. Explain that. I have one more. Your President also wants to pass a \$250 billion estate tax bill, also without paying for it. That is right. Well, it is right. Look it up. I am on the Budget Committee, so I see these bills. Is the Senator on the Budget Committee?

Mr. DURBIN. No, I am not. I yield further for a question.

Mr. BUNNING. The Senator in the chair is, so he knows what has been proposed.

Mr. DURBIN. I yield for the purpose of a question.

Mr. BUNNING. The question I asked about the 60/40, I didn't hear anybody answer that. The Senator from Oregon is gone. He was the guy who posed the question.

Mr. DURBIN. In response to the Senator from Kentucky, this is a great debate. I think we ought to continue it. But can we remove from the audience the millions of Americans who will not have unemployment checks as of Sunday night because of the Senator's interest in this issue? When you think about this, we ought to be engaged in this, and you and I ought to stay up late to talk it over and talk about what we should do. But why are we leaving these unemployed people in Kentucky and in Illinois in the middle of this debate? These people have nothing to do with what happened with John Kasich, of Columbus, OH, or what happened with President William Jefferson Clinton. They are trying to provide food for their families in the morning. Instead, we have dragged them into the middle of this deficit and debt debate.

For those who have just tuned into this conversation, the Senator from Kentucky has objected to extending unemployment benefits for 30 days, and COBRA benefits, which pay for health insurance for the unemployed for 30 days.

Because of his objection—he is the only Senator to object—I will find 15,000 people in my State of Illinois, as of Sunday night, losing their unemployment benefits. If you wonder why I am still on the floor at 10:20 p.m. in Washington, on Thursday night, after a pretty long day, it is because I thought to myself: How in the world can I walk away from this Chamber, go home and relax, realizing that 15,000 people, come Sunday night, in Illinois are going to get cut off from unemployment benefits?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, we have been talking about whether tax cuts were paid for. Let's talk about

other things that weren't paid for. That is what this is about. As the Senator knows—in fact, I know the Senator from Illinois gets irritated at me sometimes because I am constantly trying to figure out ways that we can be more fiscally responsible around here. Sometimes I swim upstream on some of those things. I was one of the cosponsors of pay-go. In fact, pay-go was in place in the 1990s, and it was allowed to expire in Congress. It was 2000, or 2001, or 2002, in the early years of the Bush administration, when the Republicans had the majority. They let it go. They said they didn't need pay-go anymore. This is probably the most glaring example, and it gets in my craw, because I now hear so much about fiscal responsibility, and as we struggle with this health care bill, making sure that we pay for it, I look back at Medicare Part D. Now that is a lallapalooza right there, Medicare D.

I am wondering if the Senator from Illinois remembers what the vote was on the motion to waive the Budget Act on Medicare D.

Mr. DURBIN. I do not.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Well, it is interesting. It was a big majority to waive the Budget Act. I have the vote here. There were 61 votes to waive the Budget Act, including our friend from Kentucky. I think the CBO score on that was around \$450 billion, as I recall.

Mr. DURBIN. That is correct.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Not a dime of it paid for—not one dime. It is all on the credit card, one big blob of red ink.

Is the Senator aware how many of our friends on the other side of the aisle have new religion—this is new religion about balancing the budget—and how many actually voted for Medicare D? It was a brandnew entitlement program, a massive government entitlement program, a government-run health care-related government program, and not one dime was paid for? Do you know how many on the other side, who are still serving today, voted for this new entitlement program?

Mr. DURBIN. No, I do not.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. It was 24. Do you know who the Senators were who voted for this massive, government-run entitlement program that added hundreds and billions of dollars to our debt—not tax cuts? We can argue about whether tax cuts create jobs. Clearly, those didn't because we inherited a big mess in terms of job creation. But do you know who the Senators serving on that side are who now want to preach about fiscal responsibility and pay for programs—how many were willing to put that kind of program on the credit card? They were Senators ALEXANDER, BENNETT, BOND, BROWNBACK, BUNNING, CHAMBLISS, COCHRAN, COLLINS, CORNYN, CRAPO, ENZI, GRASSLEY, HATCH, HUTCHISON, INHOFE, KYL, LUGAR, MCCONNELL, MURKOWSKI, ROBERTS, SESSIONS, SHELBY, SNOWE, and VOINOVICH.

All of it was a massive government entitlement program run out of Wash-

ington—big government, big bill, not paid for, and there was not one word about it needing to be paid for. And we fast forward to now. That is a big part of our deficit. We now figured out on Medicare D that we transferred a bunch of taxpayer money straight to the bottom line profits of the pharmaceutical companies. I wasn't here then, but maybe the Senator can enlighten me. My recollection is that the biggest people in favor of Medicare D were pharma.

Mr. DURBIN. The Senator is correct. It was their belief that they would make a lot of money.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. They have made a fortune on the backs of taxpayers.

Mr. DURBIN. Those of us who supported some kind of competitive bidding and government buying in bulk to reduce costs were defeated because pharma objected.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. In that bill, they even outlawed the ability of the government to negotiate for lower prices based on volume. Those are “good business practices”—make sure we cannot get a good deal based on how many drugs we are going to buy. We cannot even lower the cost of this massive government entitlement program by negotiating for lower prices based on volume. They outlawed that.

Mr. DURBIN. This cost over \$400 billion, and many Republican Senators, including the Senator who has objected to unemployment benefits for millions of people in America who are out of work, voted for this program that was unpaid for. Now they tell us we cannot extend unemployment benefits to people in Kentucky and Illinois and Missouri because we have not paid for them. Clearly, it is a double standard.

I might add that when it came to the estate tax, aka the “death tax,” according to some, on June 7, 2006, the Senator from Kentucky took the floor and said:

Mr. President, I rise today in strong favor of abolishing one of the most unjustified taxes we have in America today, the death tax. Americans should not have to talk to their undertaker and their tax man on the same day. Small businesses and family farms should not be forced to close down in order to pay the government money because a loved one has passed away.

Then when the Death Tax Repeal Permanency Act was called for a vote, the Senator from Kentucky voted to repeal this tax, costing the government \$300 billion; that is over \$300 billion added to our national debt. This tax affects less than one-half of 1 percent of all the people in America, the wealthiest people in our country. To provide \$300 billion in tax relief to them—the Senator from Kentucky said we can add that to the deficit and that is OK. But when it comes to providing a \$1,100 monthly unemployment check to someone in Illinois who is struggling to find a job, he says no, that adds to the deficit. So for the wealthiest in America on the estate tax, there is no accountability, no reckoning, but for the poorest in America, the most strug-

gling families in America, we are going to hold them to the hardest economic standard. To me, that is at least inconsistent, if not inexplicable.

Mr. BUNNING. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. DURBIN. I have yielded to the Senator from Missouri for a question.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. I have a couple more questions. I wasn't here when the major tax cuts went through in the Republican Congress with President Bush—the tax cuts that were supposed to bring about great prosperity and job creation in our country. Of course, they didn't. We have had record job losses. As President Bush left office, my recollection is that we were having between 600,000 and 700,000 job losses every month. Clearly, the plan that these tax cuts would be a time of wine and roses for all didn't work out. My recollection is that that tax cut was done by reconciliation, wasn't it?

Mr. DURBIN. I would have to check my notes.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. I think it was. Reconciliation only lasts for so long and then they sunset. I think that was one of those things where a massive amount of government liability was incurred through reconciliation at that time.

Let me also ask a couple questions about the stimulus. I know the Senator from Kentucky was offered a chance to have an amendment paid for by the stimulus. I don't think that we have talked enough about what is left of the stimulus money and what it is for. It is my understanding—and correct me if I am wrong—that a big chunk of the stimulus that is left is in fact the tax cuts for working families. In fact, the tax cuts were a 2-year period. So, of course, that was about one-third of the money, and only half of that has been paid out because we have only been through a year of the stimulus. We still have money waiting to go out in the form of tax cuts to 95 percent of America—in fact, the exact opposite folks who got the tax cuts under George Bush.

Is that my understanding about what is remaining in the Treasury as it relates to stimulus?

Mr. DURBIN. I believe the Senator from Missouri is correct. It is interesting that those who are critical of the stimulus, the Recovery and Reinvestment Act, on the Republican side virtually never acknowledge the fact that one-third of that whole package is tax cuts, which is the Holy Grail on the Republican side of the aisle—tax cuts for working families.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Tax cuts for working folks.

Mr. DURBIN. Working families.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. These are working folks. They are not—frankly, my family is very blessed. The tax cuts that were passed helped my family. It didn't help some of the families out there now struggling with unemployment.

The rest of the stimulus that is out there—I have been interested in Missouri. In fact, I wrote a letter to the

budget chairs in Missouri because they were kind of puffing up about how they were going to be able to balance the budget this year. I looked into it and realized that the only way they were balancing the budget this year was because of the stimulus money. It is, in fact, the stimulus money that has gone to Kentucky, gone to Illinois, gone to Missouri, gone to Oregon, gone to Alaska, and gone to Rhode Island. That is what is allowing these State legislatures to keep from making massive layoffs of public school teachers. There would be massive cuts in education in Missouri this year, and, frankly, no cuts in public education would be popular in Missouri.

I asked the Missouri legislators. I said: Some of you have been talking about doing away with the stimulus, pulling back the stimulus. In fact, some of our friends across the aisle said we should get rid of the rest of the stimulus. I asked the State legislators: What will you cut if we pull the stimulus? Tell me how Missourians will be hurt if we decide to pull the rest of the stimulus and maybe spend it on other things, such as perhaps this emergency bill dealing with unemployment insurance. They would not tell me. They want the people of Missouri to think they are balancing that budget with fairy dust. They don't want the people of Missouri to know that, in fact, the stimulus is what is out there helping these States balance these budgets because their revenue has dropped off the charts, just like our revenue has, which is causing some of the deficit and which is certainly contributing in a great way to the debt as it relates to a drop in revenue, an increase in unemployment expenses, and then the programs that have been passed in the previous administration not paid for.

I have 20,000 Missourians—20,000—who are going to find out sometime in the next 48 hours that they are done with unemployment. I cannot help but believe that if we have this kind of crisis at the other end of the income scale, that all of a sudden we would not have this newfound religion that this is the moment, this is the hour, this is the day that we are going to find new religion about deficits. It is the wrong time.

I am a cosponsor of pay-go. I am a cosponsor of the fiscal commission. I don't take earmarks. I voted against the omnibus. I voted against many budget bills because I think there was too much fat in them. I voted against a lot of fiscal measures in this body. But this is not the time to do this on the backs of these families. It is the wrong time.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Missouri and for those who are following this debate.

Mr. BUNNING. You said you would yield to me.

Mr. DURBIN. I know. For those who are following this debate, we have asked to extend unemployment benefits for those out of work in America

for 30 days and to extend COBRA benefits which helps them to pay for their health insurance for 30 days. It passed the House of Representatives. We were prepared to pass it this week so that when the benefits expire for many people on Sunday night, they would continue.

One Senator from Kentucky, Senator BUNNING, who is on the Senate floor, objected. As a consequence, we have taken to the floor to make certain that the people who are following this debate understand the gravity of this decision. It is not a casual decision. It is a decision made by one Senator that will literally affect the lives of a lot of people.

I give an example of Stan Lipowski who lives in Rockford, IL, as I mentioned earlier an area hard hit. Stan is pretty nervous. He is 60 years old. He lives in Loves Park near Rockford. He lost his job in June and relies on his unemployment check to keep his household afloat. This is from the Rockford newspaper where he is quoted as saying:

It's not sufficient, but without it, I'd be in real trouble. I'm already borrowing against my house to put my daughter through college.

He is living on his unemployment check, and the objection of the Senator from Kentucky is going to cut off the checks for people just like him. I cannot understand why we would do this. I am going to renew my unanimous consent request.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4691, a 30-day extension of provisions which expire Sunday, February 28, unemployment insurance, COBRA, flood insurance, Satellite Home Viewer Act, highway funding, SBA business loans and small business provisions of the American Recovery Act, SGR, and poverty guidelines received from the House and at the desk; that the bill be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANDERS). Is there objection?

Mr. BUNNING. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. BUNNING. There are so many things that I would like to say in response to so many Senators. Before I do that, I want to straighten a few things out. First of all, the prescription drug Part D—I want to help out my good friend from Missouri and my good friend from Rhode Island. I want them to know that the \$400 billion that was spent has not been spent. Just for their information. And the Democratic alternative proposed by Representative PETE STARK on the Ways and Means Committee in the House of Representatives cost over \$1 trillion to fund. That was the alternative to the Republican \$400 billion.

I know the Senator from Missouri was not here. She probably doesn't

know Representative STARK. I served with him for 8 years on the Ways and Means Committee. The same thing goes. If you don't like Part D of Medicare, you have 59 Senators and you can repeal it anytime you want, or at least try to, if you think it is misspent money.

Somebody complained about HHS negotiating drug prices. Our own scorekeeper, CBO, said we would have—I was on the committee—we would have no savings if they negotiated directly with the drug companies. Those profits that my good friend from Illinois talked about are not profits that go to the drug companies because any of the Medicare facilities we use, whether it be a hospital or a doctor or Medicare Part B or Part A or Part D—all of those moneys go to doctors, hospitals, and people who get prescription drugs to pay for those prescription drugs.

You have to look at the benefits and see if they outweigh the complaints.

I object.

Mr. DURBIN. I ask for the regular order.

Mr. BUNNING. I object and would like to make a unanimous consent—

Mr. DURBIN. Regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator asked for the regular order. Is there objection to his request?

Mr. BUNNING. No.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. He said he did not object.

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. As I understand it, the unanimous consent request is agreed to?

Mr. BUNNING. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky objects?

Mr. BUNNING. Yes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I thought maybe we had gotten through to the Senator from Kentucky.

It is interesting, he wants to talk about everything except the unemployed people affected by his objection. I say to the Senator from Kentucky, we can relitigate all you want. The fact is, the Medicare prescription drug program, which costs \$400 billion over a 10-year period of time, is not paid for and you voted for it. So when it comes to deficit reduction, you pick and choose those issues that you will spend money on. Tonight you are making it clear that you will not spend money to help unemployed people—people across Kentucky and across Illinois.

Some of these stories I received from my State I am sure you received from your State. Here is one from a woman in Bullhead City, IL:

My husband and I are in our fifties and lost our jobs in 2008. I knew immediately we were in trouble so we took our savings and moved to a state park where rent is \$400 a month, including utilities.

They were living in a camper.

My husband has gotten sick and not been able to see a doctor as we have no medical insurance, our unemployment benefits ran

out in August and we have no income. The \$400 rent that seemed so cheap a year ago is now a struggle to pay. To keep our phone and Internet on is a struggle, yet imperative—

Because that is the way they look for jobs.

Neither of us has ever been without until now. I have found that it is more and more difficult and our spirits are at an all-time low. I write this with tears in my eyes, not so much for myself but for the thousands who are facing these difficult times alone. I could not do it alone.

When my husband left the house this morning to look for work, I slipped a baggie of Life cereal in his pocket so he would not go hungry. We had no milk . . . too early to offer ramen noodles or macaroni and cheese.

I've always been proud to be American and of this great country, yet I can't seem to hold my head up these days. I barely have enough money left to make it. . . . I wait and pray for an extension [of unemployment benefits] to buy us more time.

I implore the Republicans to quit dangling carrots in our faces and do the right thing.

That is what this is about, Senator BUNNING. This woman and people like her all across America who will be turned down for unemployment benefits because of your objection. Why are we doing this to these people, whether they live in Tennessee, Kentucky, or any other State? We are a caring people, and I know the Senator from Tennessee feels that way. I do too.

Mr. BEGICH. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. DURBIN. I will be happy to yield for a question from the Senator from Alaska.

Mr. BEGICH. I know we talked about unemployment which is a significant piece of this bill. I also want to point out there are other pieces. I want to make sure I am correct. Maybe the Senator could clarify this.

I know he mentioned in the very early hours when we started this discussion that there were issues that deal with small business, seniors, and it has two other major components.

Is it correct that this bill also deals with seniors and small businesses?

Mr. DURBIN. Yes, it is correct.

Mr. BEGICH. I appreciate the Senator's constant reminder that this debate is about real people. I don't know what the debates were in years past. I was not here, as Senator MCCASKILL and Senator MERKLEY mentioned. I was not here. People read and watch what is going on. They see right through what is going on: The wealthiest of the wealthiest get the privileges of this body, and people working every single day and those now unemployed ask for a little bit of help to make sure they can make it through these tough times, and the other side of the aisle turns their back on them.

You used the example of seniors. In Alaska, the Medicare reimbursement rate is critical. We are one of the highest cost States. We have less doctors today than yesterday, the year before and the year before. We have very few. I met with our clinics today. I think it is down to one in Anchorage that accepts new Medicare patients. Now we

say we are not going to make sure these reimbursement rates are the right rate. So now we will have more doctors not serving our seniors. It is not only about the unemployed. They are about to throw seniors over the cliff, at least in my State.

Does this bill deal with seniors and making sure the reimbursement rate is the right rate so doctors can perform the services these seniors need?

Mr. DURBIN. I would say to the Senator from Alaska that is correct. According to the 2009 Medicare Trustees Report, on January 1, 2010, physicians were expected to face an across-the-board cut of 21½ percent. By 2014, the cuts to physicians treating Medicare patients would be 40 percent. We have averted these cuts with short-term extensions, because at those reimbursement levels many doctors would stop treating Medicare patients.

Mr. BEGICH. I know in my state the answer is: They will. This is a significant problem even at the 21-percent rate of reimbursement. So not only do we have the unemployed now, whom the other side seems to have a problem with, yet when it comes to the richest of the rich, they have no problem dealing with them, taking care of them unfunded.

The pharmaceuticals—I know this debate a little bit. I know how the talk I just heard from the Senator from Kentucky sure did go around and around, but the bottom line was the pharmaceutical companies got those monies, made extensive profits, and on the backs of taxpayers. But now it is time to help our seniors, make sure they get basic care, and they are going to be thrown over. It is amazing to me, when I look at this bill—I thought it was simple. Maybe I am naive, being a new Member here, but these are simple things. The crisis in this country is the biggest recession since the Great Depression. Yet when it comes time to giving a little bit of assistance to make sure we can move through this tough time, we are not willing to assist the unemployed. Yet the richest of the rich get taken care of.

I want to ask one question about that so-called bipartisan bill that was mentioned earlier. I know earlier there was discussion, and I hope I can ask this question. The "bipartisan" bill that was talked about earlier, I know I flipped through the multiple pages of the index and saw all these extenders for businesses, and, if I remember this right—correct me if I am wrong—the unemployed had a very short extension but all these businesses got the long extensions for their tax benefits.

Again, it is a question of who do we support here and who do we help? Am I mistaken that so-called bipartisan bill—that really wasn't bipartisan and which had a lot of issues with it—am I correct there was some imbalance there that people were concerned about?

Mr. DURBIN. I think the Senator from Alaska is correct.

Mr. BEGICH. The other piece I want to talk about, and I will end on this because I know the Senator from Oregon has a question or two, and it is one of the things I heard over and over again, and that is why I think the way this is being approached is very simple: Here it is, don't cloud it with a lot of other junk. The public has spoken, and they want transparency. They want it clean, they want it simple, and they want to understand what it is talking about, without this whole business of jamming in things left and right. Here, this is simple: Unemployment for the unemployed, taking care of our seniors.

I am on Alaska time, so this is early for me. I have plenty of time. When it is midnight here, it is 8 o'clock in Alaska, so I have plenty of time here. But when I think about these issues of seniors and the unemployed that the other side doesn't want to help, it seems the next issue—and I will wait my time here and ask about it—is small businesses—the people who are the backbone of this country—trying to help those unemployed become employed. That is another piece of this bill. Is that correct, that small business is another piece?

Mr. DURBIN. It is. The SBA programs, which would provide credit for small businesses—we were looking for a simple 30-day extension so these programs would be available. This objection has stopped that 30-day extension and it is going to close down some of those programs, as of Monday, that would be available to small businesses across the Nation.

Mr. BEGICH. Small businesses that were probably in the process of pursuing their dreams and hopes in this recession of creating a new opportunity to help those unemployed and others to build our economy. In Alaska, 52 percent of our employment is small business. They are the backbone of this country. They were kind of left out last year. This is an effort to continue to help them. Is that a fair statement?

Mr. DURBIN. The Senator from Alaska is correct.

I want to make it clear for the record, because the Senator from Tennessee came and asked me why we didn't offer to the Senator from Kentucky an opportunity to have an amendment to pay for these unemployment benefits out of the stimulus package, that was offered to him. He said, no, he didn't want to have an amendment offered on the floor because he wasn't sure he could pass the amendment. So he was offered the same chance that every Senator has had to take his idea before the Senate and to get a majority vote. That is not an unreasonable thing. That is how the Senate works.

I would also say to the Senator from Kentucky that if he believes we have surplus funds in the stimulus or Reinvestment and Recovery Act that can be spent on unemployment and the like, I am afraid he is wrong. It is important to note that of the \$166 billion in funds

remaining to be obligated, almost every dollar has already been spoken for, even if not yet obligated. So if he thinks the money that has not gone out the door of the stimulus act is not spoken for, it is not true. It is spoken for. That would have been part of the argument when his amendment could have come to the floor, an amendment which he did not care to offer.

I would tell him there are two projects in his State that will be affected if he cuts the balances in this. And I know he may not care, but some may. It is a Milton-Madison bridge replacement—Milton, KY, to Madison, IN—asked for by the Kentucky transportation cabinet. The total cost is \$131 million; TIGER funding, \$21 million—a vital link, I am told, between two towns. If the bridge is taken out of service, the resulting detours will create resulting hardships for residents on both sides of the river.

There is also another project under this Recovery and Reinvestment, which I know you voted against, but it is the Appalachian Regional Short-Line Rail Project; the location, Kentucky, West Virginia and Tennessee, and the TIGER funding there is \$17 million. The fact is many people believe these will create jobs in Kentucky and put people to work. They have been spoken for and obligated. If that money were taken out of the stimulus package, it may affect that project or some other project. But the fact is the money is not just sitting in the stimulus fund waiting to gather dust or interest; it is money that has been spoken for to put people to work in Kentucky and Illinois and all across America.

The fact is the Senator from Tennessee came and asked me why didn't we offer the Senator from Kentucky a chance to offer his amendment. We did. And if he had taken that opportunity, he might have won, he might have lost, but he would have had his day on the floor of the Senate, which is all any of us can ask for—an up-or-down vote. Instead, he said: If you don't pay out of the stimulus, no one is going to get unemployment benefits, and that is, I believe, an unreasonable position, and that is why we have taken to the floor this evening.

Mr. CORKER. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. DURBIN. I will yield to the Senator for the purpose of a question.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I have been working in an unusual way across the aisle on an issue that I think is important in this body for the last 2 weeks, and I had planned to spend all day tomorrow, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday—whatever it takes—to get a bill that I think is important to this country and important to this body. It is 10 till 11, 5 till 11. And whether you agree or disagree with the Senator from Kentucky, I am here because I think this is a broadside. The fact is that we here in the Senate give each other notice.

I understand the frustration with my friends on the other side of the aisle. I talk to many of you after the lunches

that take place. I know there is a lot of frustration. I understand the concerns of the people on my side of the aisle, especially after we just voted for a pay-for. And my guess is everybody on the other side of the aisle who is here tonight voted for it. Yet we are continuing to pass bills that are not paid for.

I am not going to debate the merits. I know you can talk about taxes for the rich, tax reductions, and all that. The fact is, you did not give the Senator from Kentucky notice this was going to occur.

Mr. DURBIN. If that is a question, I would like to respond to it. If that is a question, it is incorrect, and I want the record to be clear.

Mr. CORKER. Let me just say this—

Mr. DURBIN. I am sorry, that is not correct.

Mr. CORKER. If I can just finish.

Mr. DURBIN. Regular order. I have the floor.

Mr. CORKER. If I could just—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois has the floor.

Mr. CORKER. This also is not com-
ity.

Mr. DURBIN. I will yield for a question after I respond to the Senator from Tennessee, and what I would say is the Senator is incorrect. After the Senator from Kentucky objected this evening, the Republican side was notified that I was going to come to the floor and renew this unanimous consent request. The Senator from Kentucky knew it. He was notified in advance. We then had three subsequent rollcall votes and a unanimous consent request, and then I came to the floor. So the Senator from Tennessee is not correct. He was given prior notice.

I would be happy to yield further for a question.

Mr. CORKER. I appreciate the explanation. I believe we are stooping to a low level.

Mr. DURBIN. I am sorry, I did not hear the Senator.

Mr. CORKER. I believe we are stooping to a low level. The Senator from Kentucky and I agree on a lot and we disagree on a lot, and I am not here at this moment to debate the merits of either side. What I am saying is this is not the way the Senate functions.

Everybody in the country now knows that the Senator from Kentucky has a hold on this bill. That is something that is honored. Not a hold on the bill, but he is objecting to unanimous consent, and that is something that we honor in this body. If the attempt made tonight is going to be to keep a man 20 years my senior here, without the knowledge that this was going to happen—obviously other people had this knowledge—you can see that nobody on our side did.

I was getting ready to go to bed, get up in the morning, resume my talks with Senator DODD—which regardless of what you all do tonight I am going to continue because I think our country has serious problems that need to be dealt with—but this, in my opinion, is beneath the Senate. And while I

might be weary, I will stay here the entire night to defend the Senate and defend the fact that the Senator from Kentucky did not know this was going to happen.

I am tired. I have been working hard for a long time on a bill that I think is important. I would rather go to bed and be fresh and deal with the issues that need to be dealt with for this country, but I will stay here all night because this is not the way the Senate functions.

I am disappointed. I know that we have a lot between us, but I have felt actually, recently, that we were beginning to sort of make things click. I have seen people stepping out and doing things that I feel are the right things to do on behalf of the country, and I have talked to my good friend, the Presiding Officer tonight, about those kinds of things. I have a lot of friends on both sides of the aisle. But this is not the way the Senate functions.

Mr. DURBIN. I did yield for a question, and I don't believe the Senator has a question, but I respect him and respect his point of view.

Mr. CORKER. My question is: Is this the way the Senate functions? And I am asking someone who I respect right now.

Mr. DURBIN. I said to the Senator that we gave notice to the Senator from Kentucky, after he had made his objection. So this was not a sneak attack. As soon as he made his objection, we notified the Republican side of the aisle of what I was going to do.

Secondly, I would say that I think those of us who—

Mr. BUNNING. Unfortunately, that is not true.

Mr. DURBIN.—Put a hold on a bill or a hold on a nomination can certainly do that. I think they ought to step forward and say publicly when they do that and why they do that.

Mr. CORKER. That has been done.

Mr. DURBIN. In this situation, in fairness to the Senator from Kentucky, he has been very public and open about his objections to this. I certainly respect we have different points of view. But I would say to the Senator from Tennessee, here is what I face and what other Senators face. After we completed these rollcalls here, we would have walked out the door and gone home and relaxed and headed home for the weekend, and then come Sunday, somebody might have noticed the unemployment benefits for 15,000 people in my State were cut off, eliminated, people out of work.

I could have left. I would like to be home relaxing too—I am not a spring chicken—but I think it is an important enough issue to stand up and speak about it tonight. We have heard from the Senator from Kentucky. I have yielded to him in a way that may go beyond what is required, but I wanted him to express his viewpoint, and he has, about why he has done this.

And, yes, I am a little weary standing here, too, and I don't plan to stand here all night. But if we were to walk out that door and ignore the impact of that objection on the thousands of people in our own State, do you think we are meeting our obligation as Senators? I think it is worth speaking out. You must receive these same communications I receive from people who are out of work. These are sad, heart-breaking stories. We are about to make these stories even worse because of the objection of one Senator.

Yes, it is his right to do it. But it is our right to stand and explain the effect this is going to have on a lot of innocent people.

I yield to the Senator from Oregon for purposes of a question.

Mr. MERKLEY. I thank the Senator. I have before me a chart on workers losing Federal unemployment benefits at the beginning of March. It notes "Workers Exhausting Regular State Benefits without Additional Federal Extensions" as 380,000 workers. Then there is an additional column that says "Workers Prematurely Exhausting Their Federal Benefits" at the start of March: 813,000. I am rounding off. It has a "total" column that says, for the United States as a whole: 1,193,838 individuals lose their benefits.

As I am reading this chart, my impression is they are losing their benefits at the end of February if we do not have an extension. Am I reading this correctly?

Mr. DURBIN. I say to the Senator from Oregon, I believe it is the end of March.

Mr. MERKLEY. The end of March. But there are many people who lose their benefits much sooner if we do not pass this extension?

Mr. DURBIN. As I understand it, some will start to lose them as of Sunday night. Then, as their benefits expire, by the end of the month, the Senator is correct: 1,193,000 people. The Senator from Kentucky and others have said eventually you are going to get around to the process of actually getting the 30-day extension. It is true we could do that. We could use up another week of time of the Senate to go through the filibusters and cloture motions on the motions to proceed and the rest of it. But it strikes me as a colossal waste of time and a sad commentary on the Senate that we are forced to do this to provide simple unemployment benefits to people across America who are out of work.

Mr. MERKLEY. My friend from Tennessee has made some comments about the process. I must say I very much respected the dialog he has been involved in, in the Banking Committee, through the year I have served on that committee, working to find the right way to have regulatory reform that will help put our economy back on track. There is so much I agree with him on. But I completely, respectfully, disagree that it is inappropriate, when unemployment benefits are threatened for

our workers in our States, to come to this floor and say: This matters. This matters for working families.

When I was asking the people of Oregon to consider my candidacy to come here to represent them, I went on a 100-town tour with 100 public townhalls. In every townhall, people came and talked to me about the challenge of employment and health care. Tonight, both are at stake.

I had one woman who stood and she said: I got a letter from my doctor whom I have had for many years. I think she said 20 years. She said: The letter fired me from being a patient because I am on Medicare now and that the doctor had dismissed all the Medicare patients because the calendar could now be filled with folks with private insurance that paid better.

My colleague from Alaska was talking about that problem in Alaska. It is a huge problem in Oregon that our seniors who are on Medicare cannot get in the door of a doctor—at least it is increasingly difficult. The result of it being increasingly difficult is, a program they have counted on to provide their health care they are unable to utilize.

Tonight we are considering an extension or a fix of the physician payments related to this very issue, whether doctors are going to take and keep taking Medicare patients in their agenda. We have talked about unemployment, but it is equally important we address this Medicare rate because, in my State, it is a growing challenge. We have a generational contract with our citizens over Medicare that they are going to be able to get in the door of a doctor's office. If we do not address this payment issue, then we are not honoring that generational commitment under the Medicare Program.

So I do, respectfully, disagree with my colleague from Tennessee. I wish we had more debates such as this. I wish we had more debates such as this with votes. I wish we had a vote tonight, with a debate, and that my good colleague from Kentucky had agreed to have the debate and had made his case and persuaded us on this floor of his point or that others would have made a different point and would have been persuasive. But we didn't have that debate because the offer was made and the offer was rejected.

Here I am tonight, looking at the thousands and thousands of Americans who are going to lose their health care because they will not be able to get in a doctor's door, who are going to lose their COBRA benefits and therefore will not be able to afford the expense of health care because they are unemployed, who are going to lose their unemployment insurance benefits—or looking at the businesses that are trying to get small business loans that will not be able to get them if we are not extending the small business loan guarantee program.

I think this is about one of the most important debates for working Ameri-

cans. We need to get this 1-month extension, we need to respect that everyone in this Chamber, every one of our 100 Senators can proceed to carry this debate on over this coming 30 days. We are going to have another chance to vote on this. But tonight we should not take our differences over the process—or our differences over what happened during the Bush administration—and take it out on the most vulnerable members of our society.

So I ask my colleague from Illinois, does he share my concern that we are taking procedural differences and age-old debates and we are taking it out on the most vulnerable? Is it the wrong thing to do, as I believe?

Mr. DURBIN. I say to the Senator from Oregon that is exactly why I am standing. I didn't plan on doing this. I had a pretty full day down at the Blair House and other places. I believed, by the end of the day, the Senator from Kentucky would agree to a vote. He would have had his chance on the floor—which is all we can ask for in the Senate, to argue his point of view—and that we would be able to go home for the weekend knowing unemployed people across the United States would not have their benefits cut off—cutting off unemployment checks in the midst of this recession.

I had not planned on being here tonight, but I thought to myself, I say to the Senator from Tennessee, how can I walk out that door and go home and go to bed and say: Well, just another day, another objection. Those 12 million people who sent me here expect me to stand for them once in a while.

That is what I am trying to do. I cannot believe we have reached the point in the Senate where these battles over cosmic issues are being visited on people who are struggling to survive day to day, to put food on the table. That is what it has come down to. That is exactly what it has come down to. I think that is unfortunate. I think we are better than that. I think we should be better than that as a Nation and as a Senate.

Does the Senator from Vermont seek the floor to ask a question? I yield for the purposes of a question.

Mr. SANDERS. I say to my good friend, the Senator from Tennessee, he is a good friend as is the Senator from Kentucky. I like the Senator from Kentucky. I know he is honest. He is sincere. He is not hiding. He is here. I respect that. We disagree very strongly on his position.

The Senator from Tennessee said a moment ago his point of view, this is not the way the Senate functions, that is not what the Senate is about, in so many words.

If you go and ask millions of people and say if the amendment of Senator BUNNING came to the floor of the Senate—no one can predict what the vote would be, but my guess is he would probably lose. That is my guess. But he has decided, one person, to say to hundreds and hundreds of thousands of

workers, I, one Senator, am exercising my right, no question about that, and I am going to object. I, one person who does not have the votes to pass my amendment, am saying to people—you have heard the Senator from Illinois describing these stories of the pain, turmoil that families are going through. No one disputes what he is saying. It is going on in Tennessee, it is going on in Vermont, Kentucky, Missouri. We all understand that. I don't think there is a disagreement. People are hurting terribly.

I don't think there is a disagreement. When people Monday morning wake and find they are not getting the safety net of that life-supporting check, do you know what people are going to be feeling? Do you know what panic? They don't know how the bureaucracy works. Suddenly, they wake and somebody says: I am not getting my check. Am I ever going to get a check? Well, they are going to get a check, but it is delayed.

There was an article in the paper just the other day, one of the ramifications of this recession, and we all know it is true, is what it is doing to the emotional health of people. Think about people who want to work, who have worked their whole lives and cannot find a job. Do you know what it is doing to them? To their emotional well-being? Do you think they like unemployment checks? The vast majority don't want it—a thousand times more they would like a job. Suddenly, for no understandable—they don't understand what is going on. I don't understand what is going on half the time in the Senate. Suddenly, because one Senator says: I am sorry, I object, I object, and thousands and thousands of people are wondering whether they are going to survive.

They are going to get their checks. We will eventually pass this.

This is a good debate. We have a \$14 trillion national debt. How did we get here? How do we resolve that debt? Who in this room thinks that a \$14 trillion debt is sustainable? Nobody does. We have to deal with that issue. Who caused it? We have disagreements. How do you solve it? We have disagreements. Let's argue out those disagreements but not on the backs of people today who are hurting and hurting terribly.

One of the points I would like to ask the Senator about is we are not just looking at record-breaking unemployment in our lifetimes. This unemployment rate takes place after years and years of decline.

There was an interesting piece—I don't have the date, it was a couple months ago—in *USA Today*; astounding facts. What they said—this is from *USA Today*, I think going through the census data. Between 2000 and 2008, men between 25 and 34 saw an 11.7-percent drop in their median income; people, then, from 45 to 54, 11.2 percent drop. In other words, all over this country we see people who are furious.

They are angry. They are confused. Do you know why? They went through a decade where they worked hard and at the end of that decade they were poorer than when they began the decade and then came the Wall Street collapse and then came massive unemployment. What we are trying to do—no one thinks the extension of unemployment is the solution. We have to rebuild the economy. We have to create jobs. But I hope nobody in this room thinks it is acceptable or moral that we allow desperate people to go over the cliff—not to have money to buy food?

Hunger in the United States of America today is a serious problem. It is not a joke. This is America. Desperate people, for their kids, for their parents, need that unemployment check.

We are going to pass this. I gather we will pass it next week. But all we are doing is disrupting the lives of hundreds of thousands of people for no good reason. Senator BUNNING has raised important issues. I disagree with him, but those issues are important. Let's debate them. But you do not have to do it on the backs of the middle class and the working class who have been decimated for years and are now in worse shape than they have been and now we are suddenly pulling out the rug.

I ask my friend from Illinois, my assumption is, we are at some point soon going to pass these unemployment extensions. My understanding is, I don't know how it is going to be, but I suspect many Republicans are probably going to vote with many on this side; is that a correct assumption? And are we simply bringing more pain and confusion to hundreds of thousands of people who suddenly, Sunday, Monday, are going to find out they don't get a check?

Mr. DURBIN. I would say, in response to the Senator from Vermont, the last time we went through this exercise about unemployment benefits, he may recall there was a Republican Senator who insisted on an amendment on the bill relating to ACORN. If he could not get another chance to take a swing at the organization, ACORN, he was going to hold up the unemployment benefit bill.

I reached the limit of my patience at that moment. I thought to myself, it was not the first, second, third, or fourth or fifth time, it was going to be the sixth or seventh time. There was a belief on his part that he had to keep taking a swing at this organization, even at the expense of delaying unemployment benefits.

I will tell you, I think that is unfortunate. If you want to fight a battle, for goodness' sakes, make it a fair fight. Do not fight the battle over the bodies of people who are unemployed and struggling to get by on a day-to-day basis. If you want to fight the battle of the deficit, fight the battle of the deficit on the budget resolution or whatever appropriations bill you choose.

But to deny unemployment benefits to make your point about the Nation's debt takes this to an extreme. That is why I am here. That is why I did not go home tonight. I would like to be there to see what is happening with the Olympics and what every other American family is doing. But I thought to myself, I cannot walk out that door without speaking up for what I consider to be an unjust decision by one of my colleagues.

He sees it differently. I do like Senator BUNNING. He and I may have had our differences, but we have had some good conversations about baseball. Maybe that is all but about baseball.

Mr. SANDERS. I would say that the Senator and I have had strong agreements. I would ask the Senator from Illinois, in the hearing of the Senator from Kentucky: Look, the Senator from Kentucky has raised important issues. I would hope that he would allow us, not for our sake, but for the sake of tens and tens of thousands of people, to get those checks out. Let's come back and continue that debate.

You have raised the right issues. These unemployment checks are going to go out, unless I am mistaken. So all we are doing is disrupting the process. We understand where you are coming from. You have raised a fair point. It is a very important issue.

But I would, through my friend from Illinois, ask my friend from Kentucky, who is a friend—I like JIM BUNNING: Let us continue this debate. But it does not have to be tonight. It does not have to be in a way that causes confusion and uncertainty and a lot of pain for a lot of people. So I would—

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Would the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. DURBIN. I would be happy to yield. But I would say also to the Senator from Tennessee and the Senator from Kentucky, there is a version of this unanimous consent request which will give you your vote. If the Senator would agree to that. You will not.

I yield to the Senator from Missouri.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. The Senator from Tennessee and the Senator from Vermont and the Senator from Rhode Island all came here in the same class. The Senator from Oregon just arrived in January. So we have not been here for a long time to watch how the Senate works and how the Senate traditionally has worked. I know it appeared to my pal from Tennessee that this looked like some organized ambush of the Senator from Kentucky. I have to tell you the truth, we are not that well organized. If we were that well organized, we probably would have been doing more of this a long time ago.

I honestly came down to the Senate floor understanding a deal had been made to give Senator BUNNING a vote on his amendment. I expected that vote to occur. I had not talked to my office. I was surprised when I got to the floor and realized that Senator BUNNING, which he can do under the rules, was going to hold it.

I walked up as I was finishing voting on the third bill, and I said to DICK: Are you going to stick around and make him object again?

He said: You know, I think I am going to stick around for a while. I just do not feel right going home.

At that moment I thought: I do not feel right about going home either. I think it is time, if we are going to do an objection every 5 minutes, and if we are going to have holds—if this was a hold on a nominee, it could wait until Monday. But when Senator BUNNING decided to do this, it came at a risk. And the risk it came with was that there were going to be Senators who were going to speak out about it. There were going to be Senators who were going to disagree with him, and they were going to publicly say that this is not the moment.

This \$10 billion, with all of this deficit spending that has gone on for the last decade, this is not the moment to have one Senator say: I can stop it. So I felt like I wanted to talk about it. But nobody organized this. Nobody said: JEFF MERKLEY, can you stay? This is just some of us decided we wanted to stay and talk about it.

Here is what I ask. Have there been this many objections and holds traditionally in the Senate?

Mr. DURBIN. No.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Have we had this many? Have there been this many objections to the regular order of the Senate traditionally?

Mr. DURBIN. I have been here 14 years—14 years in the House, 14 years in the Senate. This Senate has changed so dramatically in the 14 years I have been here. We actually had debates on the floor of the Senate. We had Members offering amendments back and forth. I mean good debates. I thought it really was a joy to be part of a deliberative body that engaged in that.

But now we are in this era of cloture and filibuster and holds and objections, and it grinds to a halt. You think to yourself: No wonder there is frustration among the membership, and no wonder so many people on the outside look at us and say: Why are they not doing things?

How can we explain to people in Missouri, Illinois, or Tennessee or Kentucky that we are here tonight because we are going to cut off unemployment benefits? You know, the Senator is right, the Senator from Vermont is right. The day will come when those unemployment benefits will go through. It may take us a week. We may have to eat up a whole week of the Senate Calendar to get that done.

You think to yourself: Senator, is there not something you should be doing that is more important? And we know there is. We should be working on a jobs program. We should be working on health care. You are working on financial regulations. I know, Senator CORKER, you may be upset with me at this moment. But I respect you so much. It shows extraordinary courage on your part to step up and try and tackle this tough issue.

I am glad you are doing it. It does harken back to a better era in the Senate when people did work on a bipartisan basis. So I would say to the Senator from Missouri, we have been here for a while, and I know there are staff people here who did not plan to be here this late. In deference to them, I am going to allow the Senator from Missouri to ask a question. I am going to then make a unanimous consent request again. Then at that point, I will not make it after that point.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Well, I guess what I am trying to ask the Senator is—I do not think most Americans think the Senate is working very well right now. I think most Americans think we are behaving sometimes like children. I think most Americans are not sure what the rules are and what the difference is between a cloture, a filibuster, a motion to proceed, and a motion to recommit; what is the difference between a reconciliation and a conciliation or all of the other terms we throw around here.

But there is one thing I think we all need to come to grips with; that is, if we are going to try to stop the place, we need to be proud to own it. I think that goes on both sides of the aisle. If a Senator wants to hold a nomination, I do not think they should be allowed to keep it secret for 10 seconds. If somebody wants to try to hold a bill or wants to object to something, I think this nonsense that they have had in the Senate forever that it is a secret for a while is the stupidest thing that I can possibly imagine.

If you are big enough to get elected to the Senate, you ought to be big enough to own what you do with your rights when you get here. Senator BUNNING has stood up strong tonight, and he has explained his position. A few of us stuck around and talked about our positions. I think that is about the healthiest thing we can do. I think it is a heck of a lot healthier than running around behind closed doors placing holds that nobody knows are there or why.

I make a pledge tonight that if I am ever going to hold anything, the minute I decide to do it, I am going to say what it is, why it is, and I am going to own it. I think it is time that all of us do that. If somebody is not willing to own it, then I hope someone comes to the floor and does to them what we are doing tonight.

I think the sooner we own what we are doing with our rights in the Senate, the sooner we wear them like a proud coat of bright-colored feathers, the better off we are going to be in terms of getting things done around here. This is not about making the other side fail. That is not what this is supposed to be about. This is supposed to be about us working together like you are trying to do.

My friend, the Senator from Tennessee, you are doing the right thing. You are trying to find common ground and work hard, and there are plenty of us who want to do that. I hope that whatever is motivating you to work as

hard as you are working in a bipartisan way, I hope it is contagious because if you can spread it around a little, I think the American people would be so proud that we would quit this nonsense of political holds and political “gotcha” amendments.

By the way, I am the first to admit this has gone on on both sides. This is an equal opportunity Senate. But it is time that we try to make this place work better.

I have to tell you honestly, my dear friend, I think tonight helps. I do not think it hurts. I think it is a good thing, and I am proud to have participated in this tonight. I think the Senate would be a healthier place if we did it more often.

I thank the Senator from Illinois for yielding for this time, and I thank him for sticking around as long as he has, so at least we now know what has happened and why.

Mr. DURBIN. If that is a question, I agree. In defense of the question, I agree with what the Senator said.

I yield to the Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I was presiding during the time that my friend, Senator CORKER, was speaking. I did not have the chance to respond. But I want to assure him, through the Chair and through this question, that as the distinguished Senator from Missouri has just said, this was not planned on our side, at least not by me. I came for the votes.

The only surprise tonight was my surprise that a Senator was going to stop our unemployment insurance program. It never crossed my mind, until it just happened tonight, that was within the realm of possibility. I have 75,000 people unemployed in my small State of Rhode Island. We are at 13 percent unemployment.

So when I discovered, as a surprise tonight at these votes, that this was going to happen, like Senator DURBIN, I could not just walk away from this Chamber. No way. No way.

But it was not as part of a planned surprise. The person in my life who was surprised as to what happened tonight was me. Frankly, I am still surprised, and I am surprised this has not resolved itself during the course of this discussion.

I am surprised that the 75,000 people in Rhode Island and over 1 million people in this country, who are going to wake up to the worry and concern and extra anxiety that Senator SANDERS spoke about, are going to have to face that. I think it is unfortunate. But it is not because of a surprise attack by me. It is because I am responding to a surprise to something that I think is very unfortunate and extraordinarily painful for tens of thousands of regular working people who did nothing wrong but cannot find work in this economy in my home State.

I thank the Chair.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Senator. I am happy to yield for a question from the Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Illinois. I have to say to my friend from Missouri that I agree that the discussion has been very good. I received an e-mail from my staff regarding what was happening. I got in my car and drove down here. I have to say that as I look across the other side of the aisle and on this side, I have a lot of friends, a lot of goodwill.

I say to the Senator from Illinois, I don't think I have ever, in my short time here, 3 years 2 months, I don't think I have offered a message amendment. I don't think I have ever offered anything that was meant to obstruct unnecessarily. As a matter of fact, I offer very few amendments. I try to do my work with other Senators and bring things to the floor that are hopefully ready to pass.

At the end of the day, the Senator from Vermont is the best I know in this body at talking about compassion for people that I know he believes; I think we all believe. I always listen to him with great awe, candidly, at his ability to express what all of us feel about people who are unemployed or have large heating bills or whatever may exist. I don't really think that is what this debate is about. It isn't. This debate is about the fact we are spending money that we don't have. Yet we have passed a \$787 billion stimulus bill that won't be spent until way beyond 2012.

I cosponsored an amendment, a piece of legislation with the Senator from Colorado, Mr. BENNET, to use some of that unspent money past 2012 to pay down the deficit. He is in a tough race. He wanted me to cosponsor something that was sensible, and I did.

This is really not about the fact that all of us want to see people who are unemployed have these benefits. We don't want to see physicians take a 21 percent cut. It is about paying for it. I wonder if the Senator from Illinois would agree to me offering unanimous consent that we pass this measure that is before us, and we do it tonight. And we pay for it with unspent funds from the stimulus bill that won't be utilized or are not planned to be utilized until beyond 2012. That is what this debate is about. All of us want to see people get unemployment benefits. We want that. We want to see them have all the things that are in this bill. It is not about that. You know that if this bill were offset, it would have been voice voted out of here.

I ask unanimous consent that we pass this measure out, that we offset it with unspent stimulus moneys that are going to be utilized past the year 2012, and then we work together, just like we are tonight, to figure out a way to make up that difference. I know this is something that is very important to the administration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask for the regular order. I yielded for the purpose of a question.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois yielded for a question.

Mr. DURBIN. I would say to the Senator from Tennessee, here is the difficulty we face. Of the stimulus funds currently sitting there, they have been obligated. They will be spent. There won't be a surplus, we are told, of any funds. This would have come out during the course of the debate, if Senator BUNNING had accepted our offer of the amendment. To agree to this now is to basically agree to what he has been asking for, just say we will pay for it with the stimulus. I don't think it should be, and I don't think it can be. It should be the subject of a good floor debate. That is what the Senate is for.

I understand you can't make a unanimous consent request when I have yielded only for a question. But that would be my response to you based on that.

Mr. CORKER. I would like a ruling from the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois is correct.

Mr. CORKER. I thank the Senator for yielding for a question, and I thank him for this discussion. I understand my request is out of order. I actually thank each of you for your heartfelt comments. All of us know that we all want to see these benefits extended.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am going to ask this unanimous consent request one last time this evening. I will not be making another unanimous consent request until tomorrow morning. There will be an opportunity, I believe, with the Senate coming into session, pursuant to the adjournment script, at about 9:30 in the morning. I will make one request. I will make the same unanimous consent request in the morning. That is the only time I will make it. But at this point that is my plan.

I thank the members of the staff, all of them, who were not notified that this was going to happen this evening and had to make changes in their own personal and family plans as a result.

As we have said, there will be thousands and thousands of people across America impacted by this decision in just a few days. That is why many of us thought it was worth the wait and the effort. I still believe it was.

I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4691, a 30-day extension of provisions which expire on Sunday, February 28—unemployment insurance, COBRA, flood insurance, Satellite Home Viewer Act, highway funding, SBA business loans and small business provisions of the American Recovery Act, SGR, and on poverty guidelines—received from the House and at the desk, that the bill be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BUNNING. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. DURBIN. It is my understanding we will now move to closing the session. I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, particularly on the Democratic side, for sticking with me through the course of the evening. None of us had planned for this, and it came as a surprise that this issue came before us. I think there were heartfelt sentiments stated here, and I thank them very much for staying with me.

REMEMBERING VERNON HUNTER

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I rise once again to recognize one of America's great Federal employees. I have spoken before about the values that bind our Nation's public servants together. One of the most fundamental of these is sacrifice.

We see this quality each day in the men and women who serve in uniform, both in the military and in law enforcement. They put themselves in harm's way to keep us all safe and protect our freedoms and way of life.

Those who work in civilian roles also routinely take risks to their safety when performing their jobs, including the many Federal employees posted overseas and at our borders.

This week, sadly, our Nation mourns the loss of a truly outstanding public servant who was killed last Thursday in the tragic attack against an office building in Austin, TX.

Vernon Hunter was a 27-year veteran of the Internal Revenue Service and before that served for two decades in the U.S. Army.

Earlier this month, I honored an IRS employee who made it possible for tens of millions to file their taxes electronically. At that time I spoke about how our IRS employees continually work hard to make it easier and less stressful for Americans to pay their taxes.

Vernon was one of the great IRS managers who helped process tax filings and resolve issues for taxpayers. He had a reputation for being kind and full of life. He always wanted to help people solve their problems. His biography reads like a lesson in service and sacrifice.

A native of Orangeburg, SC, Vernon enlisted in the U.S. Army after graduating from high school. He served two combat tours in Vietnam, at the same time facing discrimination at home when he was turned away from an all-White boarding house despite wearing the uniform. Vernon remained in the Army for 20 years, after which he worked for a short time in the private sector. However, as do many of our great Federal employees, he believed he had always been called to serve his Nation, and he returned to Federal employment nearly three decades ago when he began working for the IRS.

Last week, Vernon lost his life when a small plane appeared out of the clear morning sky and struck his office