

do not have to borrow more money. There are revenues there to be had. A few people made a lot of money in the last 10 years. I don't think it is untoward to ask them to perhaps help rebuild America. The private sector companies, I am told, are sitting on about \$2 trillion in cash, and they will not invest it. There is money there. Our tax system—our system is screwed up. So we need both—yes, to make targeted cuts in certain programs. We can do that. But we also need to raise the revenues necessary to invest in putting people to work and rebuilding the infrastructure of this country.

Republicans are saying we need more tax breaks for the wealthy. If working people and the middle class are taking a hit in tough times, it should not be to pay for more tax breaks for the wealthy. As our leader just said, after weeks of debate, Republicans blocked passage of a bipartisan small business bill, and just this week they killed the Economic Development Administration development bill with a proven record of job creation. The key to renewing America and restoring our economy is to revitalize the middle class. That means investing in education, innovation, the infrastructure, boasting American competitiveness in a highly competitive global marketplace. How do we do both? We do it by making certain targeted cuts but raising revenues by raising revenues. I would have to add, one of those ways we have to think about cutting is, why we are continuing to spend billions of dollars and losing American lives in Afghanistan? What are we still doing in Iraq? I saw a recent report that said we have spent over \$87 billion in Iraq. What do we have to show for it? Higher gasoline prices than ever before and a country that is still torn apart by internal strife.

If we want to move ahead and create these jobs, it means a level playing field, fair taxation, an empowered workforce, a strong ladder of opportunity to give every American a shot at the middle class.

With the fragile economic recovery, we should not reduce fiscal support for job creation at this time. Deficit reduction efforts can start but sequenced in. When the economy is recovering, that is when they start taking place. Now is the time to invest in job creation. We need to keep our priorities straight. The greatest challenge right now is not the budget deficit. The greatest challenge is the jobs deficit. The greatest challenge is the erosion of the middle class, which is under siege in America. The middle class is being dismantled every day. People are losing their savings, their health care, their pensions and, in many cases, even their homes. These proposed gradual budget cuts, drastic budget cuts will destroy jobs and further damage the economy. The people, the middle class of America, have every reason to believe they are losing the American dream not just for themselves but for their children.

Instead of the Republican budget, which is being sold through fear and fatalism, we need a budget that reflects the hopes and aspirations of the American people. We need a budget that will invest to create jobs, that will bring future deficits under control as more people come to work, as fewer people need Medicaid, as fewer and fewer people need food stamps, as fewer and fewer people need unemployment compensation when they begin working and becoming taxpayers again. It is up to the Federal Government to take this step, and we should not be afraid to do so. It must be bold. It cannot be tinkering around the edges. It must be something that is big and that is bold and that will jump-start our economy. That is our No. 1 priority. I hope we can do this so it will not happen that we go into another Great Depression or what happened in the late 1930s; that we had to depend upon another war to stimulate Government spending and put people back to work. God help us if that is the only thing we can look forward to, to get our economy going again. We should have learned from the past, taken those lessons from the past and take the steps necessary right now to invest in jobs, to rebuild the middle class of America, and to have a fair taxation system so those people at the top who make so much—and I don't begrudge people making money, but I do begrudge if they are not paying their fair share in revenues to this country. That is our challenge. I hope Congress is up to meeting that challenge. The middle class is the backbone of America, and it is time this Congress showed the backbone to stick up for them.

I yield the floor.

Madam President, how much time is remaining on our side?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Nineteen minutes.

Mr. HARKIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, how much time do we have remaining now?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Eighteen minutes.

NEW NLRB RULES

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I also wanted to speak about the new National Labor Relations Board rules that came out just yesterday. It also has a lot to do with the middle class in America and what happens to the middle class.

In 1912, women went on strike at a textile plant in Lawrence, MA. They

inspired the Nation when they walked the picket lines with signs that said: "We want bread, but we want roses too." Well, what did they mean by that? They meant they wanted jobs, but they didn't want just bear subsistence and slave jobs. As you know, many women died in the terrible triangle shirtwaist textile plant fire. They wanted jobs, but they wanted jobs that paid a living wage. They wanted jobs that did not work people 12, 18 hours a day, 6 or 7 days a week. Those words helped to shape the character of the country we created, a shared prosperity for the American people.

Almost 100 years later, we face the same fundamental question about what kind of country we want to be. When we imagine the America of our dreams or our children and grandchildren, is bread just good enough for the middle class or should we have some roses too?

Republicans portray our country as poor and broke, and they have used that as an excuse to rationalize an unprecedented attack on the middle class. But, the reality is we are the wealthiest Nation in history. It is just more and more of our country's wealth is being concentrated at the top.

Certainly, the American people do not begrudge the rich their good fortune and success. But they do resent it when the wealthy and the powerful manipulate the political system to reap huge advantages at the expense of working people. Today, unfortunately, more and more people sense in their hearts that the rules of the game have are rigged in favor of CEOs and big corporations, and nowhere is this more apparent than the process by which workers form a union or, I should say, by which process workers are blocked from forming a union.

As it now stands, the union election process is a never-ending, bitter struggle marred by corporate intimidation and frivolous lawsuits. Workers have to walk through broken glass on their hands and knees to get the same basic rights that every wealthy CEO has the right to have the terms of their employment set out in an enforceable contract. Right now, CEO's bargain extremely generous salaries and golden-parachute retirements, but millions of hardworking Americans don't have a way to guarantee from week to week that they will have enough hours to feed their family or that their health benefits won't be cut without notice.

So the rules promulgated by the NLRB yesterday try to right this and to make it a fair and equitable process so people can form a union. The proposed rules are very modest. What it does is cut down on the number of frivolous lawsuits and removes unnecessary delays that prevent workers from getting a vote in elections. Sometimes it takes months and, in some cases, years before workers even get a chance to vote on whether or not they want to form a union. All the while, people are harassed and intimidated. These workers know first hand that justice delayed is justice denied. That is not the

American way. Workers deserve a fair shake and a fair election. If people want to form a union, they deserve that right to do so.

The steps they took are common sense. It removes unnecessary delays, cuts down on frivolous legal challenges, gives workers the right to a fair up-or-down vote, in a reasonable period of time. These new rules do not encourage unionization, and they do not discourage it. They just give workers the ability to say yes or no. Again, what they seek is valid.

The current system is broken. If a party takes advantage of every opportunity for delay, the average time before workers can vote is 198 days, and, as I have said, it has taken 13 years before people were allowed to vote in a union election. A study by the Center for Economic Policy Research found, among workers who openly advocate for a union during an election campaign, one in five is fired. Madam President, 9 out of 10 employers require their employees to attend meetings on work time to hear anti-union presentations. Workers are required to attend 10 anti-union meetings. Well, it is time to right this imbalance.

That is what the NLRB did—not tilt it one way or another but to give workers a fair right to have an election. The rules apply to secret ballot elections, but make modest changes to not to have it dragged out for years and years with frivolous lawsuits while preserving employer's due process rights. The new rules standardize time lines for union elections so that both sides have a fair chance to make their case and then employees have the right to a timely vote. They ensure that employers and employees have a level playing field, where corporate executives and rank-and-file workers alike have an equal chance to make their case for or against the union. That is all it is. It is nothing more, nothing less than that. This is a fair set of rules.

I am sure we are going to hear from the business community about this, saying this is meddling and this is going to tilt toward the unions. No, it doesn't. For far too long it has been tilted on the side of the employer and against the unions. Now we bring it back to the middle, where we say we are neither pro nor against, but we are going to let workers have the right to say whether they want to form a union. Some workplaces will choose a union, some will not. But protecting the right of workers to make that choice brings some balance and fairness to the system, so the deck isn't always stacked in favor of the wealthy and the powerful.

America's future depends on the middle class having not just bread, but roses too, just as was the case 99 years ago. Our government faces a clear choice: do we stand for seemingly endless corporate power, or do we stand for the basic rights of working people? Republicans keep pushing for special favors for the wealthy and big corpora-

tions, claiming this will create jobs and economic prosperity. Instead, over the last decade, it has brought us high unemployment and the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. The problem with trick down economics is that it failed to trickle down. Wealth has been increasingly concentrated at the top.

There is a better way. Quality jobs that pay a living wage, provide health insurance and a secure retirement are the foundation of a strong middle class. Having a strong middle class that can afford to buy quality products made in America is the recipe for our economic renewal.

I compliment the NLRB. I know I have heard there will be some challenges to it on the floor of the Senate. I hope reason will prevail and the Senate will once again stand for the inherent right of people to be able to organize and bargain collectively for their wages, hours, and conditions of employment.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

EDA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, there was a vote yesterday on the Senate floor about a bill that was pending. It goes directly to the topic just raised by the Senator from Iowa. It was the Economic Development Revitalization Act. The EDA is an agency created almost a half century ago to create incentives for businesses to build, expand, and locate in places across America where there is high unemployment. It has been a success in Illinois and almost every other State.

For every \$1 the Federal Government puts on the table, it generates \$7 in economic activity. There is not a lot to go around, so they pick those projects that are the most promising, and it is a good agency. It is an agency that has enjoyed wide bipartisan support. Yet, when it came time yesterday to vote on whether we go ahead and pass the bill to reauthorize the agency, unfortunately, we could not find 60 Senators on the floor to vote yes. So the bill languishes and basically was pulled from the calendar.

It is the second time this year, when we face this recession and high unemployment, the Senate has refused to take up a bill that literally will help businesses create jobs across America. It does not make sense, does it, that when we have so many people out of work, we cannot even agree on a bill to create jobs and help business. It does not make sense, unless the premise of this debate is understood.

The Republican minority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, said his highest legislative priority this session was to make sure President Obama is a one-term President. It is that guiding force that led to the vote yesterday. It is that guiding force that has stopped us from passing meaningful legislation

when it comes to unemployment in America, time and again. You see, if we are destined and determined to stop this President and frustrate any efforts to build jobs, then the Senate will continue to languish.

How does this work? It works because when bills come to the floor, brought by the majority leader, HARRY REID, Senators from the other side of the aisle start a steady stream procession to this desk to file amendment after amendment, until we had literally 100 amendments filed to the Economic Development Administration bill. You say: Well, maybe this bill needed some work.

The amendments had little or nothing do with the bill. They are about everything under the Sun—every issue a Senator can dream up or that his or her staff thinks might be interesting. Believe me, 100 is a modest number. We could certainly, our staff people and others, come up with hundreds more. But at the end of the day we still would not pass the Economic Development Revitalization Act. We would not help businesses locate, expand, and create jobs, and we will still continue to languish with millions of Americans unemployed.

I think it is time for us to face reality. The reality we face is that America has two deficits. The one we talk about a lot is the budget deficit, and it is serious. I was on the deficit commission, the Bowles-Simpson Commission. We looked at it long and hard and realized it is unsustainable for America to borrow 40 cents for every dollar it spends in Washington. We can't continue to do this. The debt of our Nation is growing dramatically, and we have to bring it to a stop. That means cutting spending and raising revenue. Those are the only two ways to reduce the deficit, and we have to do both. That is what the Bowles-Simpson Commission said—and I voted for it—a bipartisan vote for the Commission to move forward on the deficit. But they said something else: Don't do this too quickly; don't do it precipitously; be careful that we don't kill off the recovery we are engaged in.

The Bowles-Simpson Commission basically said to wait a year. Make a plan, make a commitment, but say for this year we are going to get America back to work. The Bowles-Simpson Commission knew—and we all know—we can't balance America's budget with 14 million people out of work. These are folks who should be earning a paycheck and paying taxes but instead are home looking for work, searching the Internet, searching the classifieds, and drawing benefits from the government instead of paying taxes. So as long as 14 million Americans are in that position, then, sadly, we are going to have a deficit that is aggravated rather than one that is cured.

So the Bowles-Simpson Commission said don't move too quickly to kill programs that make a difference. They are