

agreement to complete action on the joint resolution as well as FAA and highway extension today. Senators will be notified when votes are scheduled.

REMEMBERING SENATOR MALCOLM WALLOP

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Malcolm Wallop of Wyoming is a man with whom I served in the Senate for approximately 10 years. He represented the State of Wyoming. During that time, I can remember the work he and Alan Simpson did together—Alan Simpson, another retired Senator from Wyoming. Senator Wallop died yesterday. He was 78 years old.

Senator Wallop was a fine man. His roots in Wyoming stem back to pioneer ancestors in the Big Horn. Although he was born in New York, he served his country admirably in the Army and then worked for many years as a cattle rancher and businessman before running for office. He was extremely good friends with the great Nevadan Paul Laxalt.

There were occasions when Malcolm and I didn't agree on political issues, but he was always an agreeable man, a very fine man. I honor his service today, both as a soldier and a Senator, and certainly will miss him, as everyone in Wyoming will and all of his colleagues who worked with him here in the Senate.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in my office right across the hall, I have a wonderful picture painted by a Nevadan. It is a big painting, and it shows this handsome young man on this horse with all the trappings of a horse that is really nice, a nice horse and a beautiful saddle, and all the adornments on this man's clothes are good. I am sure the painting didn't take into consideration how he really looked when he arrived in the Las Vegas Valley because this man, Rafael Rivera, was the first non-Indian to see the Las Vegas Valley, and I am sure he was worn out and tired because he was basically lost. He was part of a Spanish expedition, and he left them almost 100 miles from where he wound up in Las Vegas. But for us, Rafael Rivera is the person who founded Las Vegas. He was able to see this beautiful place in 1829, and as a result of that, we have a number of facilities named after Rafael Rivera, as well they should be, in Las Vegas Valley.

The picture is painted perfectly. It shows Las Vegas Valley's Sunrise Mountain. The difference is, there are no people there. Now there are 3 million people in Nevada, and we have little Sunrise Mountain there. In the painting, there is no one or anything around it, but of course now there are buildings and hotels and lots of activity there.

Today, though, Mr. President, I join more than 50 million Hispanic Americans in the United States in marking the first day of Hispanic Heritage Month. This celebration of history and culture lasts through October 15. So I look forward to the opportunity of bringing Hispanic heritage and all it

has to Nevada and the rest of the country to honor the contributions of a population that is such an integral part of our national identity. For hundreds of years, Latinos have helped shape the face of this Nation.

I wrote a history of my birthplace, Searchlight, NV, and one of the interesting things I found in my research is that the railroad was built into Searchlight in the early 1900s, it is 26 miles, and it was a difficult railroad to build, but it was basically built by Mexicans who had come to the United States to do the labor that it took to do that. Some 7,000 of them built that railroad. It is not very long—26 miles long—but it took a lot of work to get it done.

So everyplace you go in America, everyplace especially you go in the West, you find contributions made by Hispanics. They have made contributions in the battlefield, in the workplace, and the classroom. They have spurred progress in the laboratory, playing field in all athletics, and, of course, in the halls of justice. They have shaped the way we farm and the way we do business. They have influenced our art and our literature. Construction sites of casinos and shopping centers around the State of Nevada—they have contributed mightily to that work that is being done and has been done.

The language has even influenced the name of the State of Nevada, which means “snow covered.” Las Vegas means “the meadows” in Spanish.

Hispanic Americans have also played an important role in this Nation's Armed Forces, as I mentioned just a minute ago. They have served in every conflict since the Revolutionary War. Nearly 30,000 of them have fought for our country in Iraq and Afghanistan and are still fighting. I thank them for their brave and dedicated service.

Every year, Latinos help propel contributions to our economy. More than 2.3 million Hispanic-owned businesses employ millions of Americans and provide crucial goods and services.

Mr. President, before leaving the subject of veterans and the good things they do, I want to make sure the Republican leader recognizes that we all celebrate a Kentuckian who today is going to be awarded the Medal of Honor, for this 23-year-old boy, in the fields of Afghanistan, saved the lives of about 40 soldiers—1 person. They had a wonderful piece on public broadcast today about his courage and what he did—of course wounded himself, but he carried people to and from battle and saved the lives, as I indicated, of a couple score of people. His name is Dakota Meyer. So I congratulate the Republican leader for having such fine people come from the State of Kentucky.

Today, the Senate recognizes the commitment of more than 50 million Hispanic Americans, family, community, and country. And that is the way it should be.

FEMA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to spread on the record how much I appreciate the support of the Republicans in allowing us to be able to get on the FEMA bill. We are on that bill now. We have some amendments pending. If we are not able to work out an agreement on that today, we will have votes on a number of cloture issues relating to that most important legislation affecting millions of Americans who have been devastated by Mother Nature.

I am disappointed, however, in one of our Republican colleagues who at this stage is holding up something that is so vitally necessary.

The House sent us two pieces of legislation that passed overwhelmingly in the House, one that will keep 1.7 or 1.8 million people working on highway and other construction around the country dealing with highways. That is an extension of 6 months. They also sent to us a 4-month extension, fully funded, of the Federal Aviation Administration, also vitally important.

Unless my friend, the junior Senator from Oklahoma, agrees to allow us to go forward, one Senator will stop 80,000 people from working. I hope he will reconsider. The issue he has presented is a little unusual. He says he doesn't like bike paths being part of the highway bill. Well, for most Americans they are absolutely important. They are good for purposes of allowing people to travel without burning all the fossil fuel on the highways.

I got up this morning very early, and I went out and did my exercise. I am not exaggerating, there were scores, at least 30 or 40 bikes—so scores may be a slight exaggeration—of people not just for exercise but traveling to work with backpacks on. That is what bike paths are all about.

We have told my friend the Senator from Oklahoma: If you don't like it, we will have a vote on it.

He said: I don't want a vote.

He said: Whatever I want, I want stuck in that bill.

We can't do that. That isn't what the House sent us, and we can't do that.

He said: Well, separate the two bills.

We have the bills from the House of Representatives. That is the arrangement we have made, and it is a good arrangement to get these two vitally important pieces of legislation passed so that we can keep people—almost 2 million people—working.

I am disappointed in that. I hope we can work something out during the day because it is really unfair for him to hold up this extremely important legislation.

There is not a State in the Union that does not have problems with 80,000 people laid off. In Nevada we have a new tower being built at McCarran Field. That is important. These people will have to stop working. That is wrong. One Senator? It is not fair to the Senate or to the country.

Will the Chair announce the business of the day?

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and Republicans controlling the final half.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 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.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

EYE-OPENING POVERTY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the report this week about the rate of poverty in America is an eye opener. The numbers that have been reported are stunning. The number of Americans living in poverty now stands at 46.2 million people. That is an increase of 8.9 million since 2007, just in 4 years. This has increased significantly since the year 2000. The poverty threshold for a mother and father with two children is an annual income of \$22,000 a year. That is less than \$2,000 a month. So for that family of four, what we are seeing is 46 million Americans make less than that. I think all of us understand how difficult it is in this day and age to survive and raise a family, but this national poverty rate should be a wake-up call to us. I hope it puts a couple of things in perspective.

I spoke on the floor yesterday about visiting a warehouse in Champagne, IL, a warehouse for the food depositories in the area. It is a warehouse where they process and send out food for food pantries that are managed by local groups, churches and the like. Almost every State has them—I am sure they do. I was in this warehouse during the August recess to talk about the increased volume of people who are going to food pantries on a regular basis. I visit these food pantries to introduce myself to those who are coming in and to learn as much as they want to tell me about their circumstances.

At this warehouse in Champagne, IL, was a woman who was very attractive and well-dressed, standing there, and I assumed she worked at the warehouse. It turned out I was wrong because she said at one point she was a teacher's aide in the local school district. I thought, Why is she here? I kept think-

ing to myself, I wonder why she is here. Maybe she is on the board of this food depository. It turns out she was there to tell me her story. She is a single mom with two young children. She has a full-time job as a teacher's aide in the school district. Because her income is below the poverty level, she qualifies for not only food stamps but also uses these food pantries. She said to me she wanted to express her gratitude that we now have extended the SNAP program, the food stamp program, to include fresh produce, fruits, and vegetables. She said it means I can take my kids to the local farmers market and they get to meet the farmers and ask questions and hear stories about where these things come from, the fruits and vegetables we buy and, she said, I get to buy healthy food to give to my kids.

I never would have picked her out of a crowd as a person who needed help to feed her children—and she did. She told me: Without this, I would be struggling. It is an eye opener for all Americans, when we hear 46 million of us are living in poverty. These are our neighbors, our friends, the people with whom we go to church. These are folks you may see in the store. They are people who are struggling, many of them working but not making enough money. Some have full-time jobs, many have part-time jobs. It is a reminder, as we get into this deficit debate, never to lose sight of the safety net in America.

We are a kind and caring people. We have proven that over many generations. We do things many other countries do not do. For one thing, we have our young men and women volunteer to risk their lives in foreign lands to try to bring peace.

In addition to that, we have been engaged for over a century in helping other countries that are struggling. I just received a handwritten letter from two grade school children in Illinois about those who are starving in Somalia. It was a heartfelt letter, asking me to do something. That is not unusual. It is a sentiment expressed over and over again in our country. We need to have the same empathy and the same compassion for our own in America.

What that means is not only saying good things and perhaps helping through our churches and other charities, but also making certain that the safety net programs in our country are there for those who are struggling. We are engaged in a mighty debate now about deficit reduction. I have been part of it for a little while in some capacities. I keep reminding those who are in the debate that there are some programs that are absolutely essential. Some of them are obvious: the food stamp program, to make sure the lady I mentioned and others like her have enough food for their children; the Medicaid Program, which provides health insurance for one-third of America's children. In Illinois it pays for over 50 percent of births and it takes care of our elderly when they are in a

nursing home and run out of their savings.

As we talk about deficit reduction, let us focus on making certain at the end of the day the safety net is still in place. Let us make sure the childcare deductions that we have in the Tax Code are there for working families, the Earned Income Tax Credit, a program started under President Reagan which acknowledges that many people who are working still need a helping hand in our Tax Code; Medicaid, that I mentioned earlier; the food stamp program; housing programs for those who are homeless and need a helping hand. The safety net has to be honored and has to be preserved in the course of our deficit debate.

But I would also say, at this point, the President has challenged us to stop giving speeches and to start moving forward on getting America back to work. He made a proposal in last Thursday's joint session of Congress to give working families across America a payroll tax cut. What would it mean in Illinois? The average income in Illinois is about \$53,000 a year. The President's payroll tax cut would be worth \$1,400 to every family making that amount of money. That is \$120 a month. It may not sound like much for people who are wealthy, but for those who are struggling paycheck to paycheck, it could make a difference.

President Obama wants to give more income security to middle-income families. That is what his proposal is about. He has turned around and said when it comes to small businesses, let us give them incentives to hire the unemployed. The only line the President delivered a week ago that I remember got a standing ovation from both sides is when the President said let's incentivize employers to hire our veterans. Everybody stood up. We know that is the right thing. They served our country, they came home, and we ought to give them a hand to help them. That is part of the President's plan.

But he went beyond that and said if people have been unemployed and an employer is willing to hire them, let us give them a tax credit to do it. The President is moving tax benefits to small businesses, the so-called job creators we hear so much about, and I believe they are, as well as to working families. But it is all paid for. This is where many Republicans take exception.

How does the President pay for getting America back to work? He asked for sacrifice from the wealthiest people in America. There are some members of the Republican Party who would not impose 1 penny more in taxes on the wealthiest people in America. They are prepared to see every other family in America sacrifice except for those who can sacrifice without feeling any pain in their lives. I don't think that is fair and I think the President is right. Those who are making the highest incomes in America should join with