

Europe, and now he wants us to believe our economy is performing as if a Western European economy has nothing to do with it.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the challenges facing the young people in America today. As we all know, one of the defining characteristics of Western European economies is the high unemployment rate, particularly among young people and recent college graduates. Sluggish growth and inflexible labor laws are two of the main reasons young people have been locked out of the labor market in those countries literally for years. Today unemployment is above 20 percent among young people in the European Union. In Spain the unemployment rate among people under the age of 25 is a staggering 50 percent.

Some of this is no doubt a result of the European debt crisis, but the more fundamental problem is decades of policies rooted in the same big government vision the President has been busy imposing right here in the United States. It is hardly a coincidence that as President Obama has tried to reshape the United States in the image of Western Europe, our own youth unemployment rate has been stubbornly high. That is what happens when you increase regulations on businesses that hire college graduates. That is what happens when you impose health care mandates on them. That is what happens when you impose new labor rules, such as the one Senator ENZI is leading the charge against this week that makes it even costlier for businesses to hire. We see the long-term effects of these things in Europe, and unless this President changes course we will see the same lack of opportunity for young people right here.

So today the President will bring his latest poll-tested message to the students at the University of North Carolina, and I am sure he will give a very rousing speech full of straw men and villains who stand in the way of their dreams. I am sure he will also express his strong support for things on which all of us already agree. But what he will not talk about is the extent to which the decisions he has made are limiting their opportunities in the years ahead.

Some of them already see this. I mean, you have to think most of these students are sharp enough to put this President's rhetoric up against his record and to conclude that it simply doesn't add up. As the promises of this President's campaign collide with real life, I think young people across the country will realize they got sold a bill of goods. The next time they are promised change, they will know enough to kick the tires first.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EXTENSION ACT OF 2012, PART II

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4348) to provide an extension of Federal-aid highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund pending enactment of a multiyear law reauthorizing such programs, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, all after the enacting clause is stricken and the text of S. 1813, as passed by the Senate, is inserted in lieu thereof.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the bill (H.R. 4348), as amended, is passed and the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

Under the previous order, the Senate insists on its amendment, requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses, and the Chair appoints the following conferees on the part of the Senate.

The Acting President pro tempore appointed Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. VITTER, Mr. HATCH, Mr. SHELBY, Mrs. HUTCHISON, and Mr. HOEVEN conferees on the part of the Senate.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2011—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1925, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S. 1925, a bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act of 1994.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from California.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am very pleased with what just happened at the desk. For those who didn't follow it, the majority leader, Senator REID, and Senator MCCONNELL, just named the conferees so we can get moving with the House and settle our differences and move forward with a very important transportation bill.

We all know how hard it has been on the construction industry. We all know the housing crisis has made it very difficult for our construction workers to get work. We all know at the same moment we have had this real problem in the construction industry—where we have well over 1 million construction workers out of work and tens of thousands of businesses that want to do

construction work—70,000 of our bridges are failing, half of our roads are in disrepair, and the American people expect an infrastructure that meets the needs of the strongest economy in the world, our economy.

So I am very pleased with what just happened. I am very pleased we see the continuation over here of bipartisan support for a transportation bill. We have Senator REID working together with Senator MCCONNELL to name the conferees, and we had a unanimous vote in our committee last year on this bill. It has been a very tortured path to get to where we are now because, for some inexplicable reason, the Republicans over in the House have insisted on just going to their own party to reach agreement rather than going to the Democrats so we can have bipartisanship over there. But I am very hopeful, with the naming of these conferees today, the House will now do its job and name conferees. I have been reading in the press that perhaps that will happen tomorrow. So I am very hopeful.

Mr. President, it is 10:20 in the morning on Tuesday, and I want to call attention to the fact we are now on the path we need to be on, starting at this moment, to get to conference. There is no reason we can't do that very soon when so much is at stake.

The Senate bill is a reform bill. There are no earmarks in that bill. That bill is fully paid for. It doesn't add to the deficit. It protects 2 million jobs and creates another 1 million jobs. What good news will it be for this economy to have this bill pass.

I know there are those who predicted this could never happen; that, A, we would never get a bipartisan bill out of our committee, but we did it; that, B, we would never get it to pass on the floor, but we did it with 74 votes; and, C, that the House will never act, and the House actually did act to move to conference. It took them a long time, but we are there. So there is no reason we cannot work together to get this done.

If Senator INHOFE and I can agree, then I think we should be able to get a very strong bill through both Houses. On my committee—the Environment and Public Works Committee, which I am so privileged to chair—we have very conservative members, such as Senators INHOFE and SESSIONS, and very progressive members, such as myself. We have Senator VITTER on the other side and Senator SESSIONS, and on this side we have Senators SANDERS and CARDIN. So we have members who reach the entire ideological spectrum, and if we can all vote for a bill, then this can happen and it will send a great signal to this country.

I thank all the groups that have worked so hard to bring pressure on all of us to keep this moving forward. It starts with a coalition that includes the AFL-CIO and the chamber of commerce. Good for them. They do not always agree, but they agree on this one.

Then we have all the business community that is behind us—the granite people and the cement people and the general contractors. The list goes on and on. There are many groups that have come together to push forward on this bill.

So I want to mark this moment. I am happy I was able to be on the Senate floor when the conferees were named. It is a great list of conferees.

We have in this bill the RESTORE Act, which will rebuild the gulf after the terrible BP spill, and we have people on this conference who were very instrumental in writing the RESTORE Act, including Senator BILL NELSON and Senator RICHARD SHELBY. Senator VITTER also was involved, and I want to take a moment to thank Senator LANDRIEU, who was a driving force on this bill. There is no question that without her insistence this wouldn't have happened. So what an opportunity we have.

Now, there are certain things I think we should keep out of this conference, and that is things that tear us apart. There is no reason to have controversy built into this conference. We can save those battles for another day. I think, with this conference, we should just all rally around the consensus of what has to be done. If it is something outside the scope of the conference, if it is unanimous and everybody thinks it is a good idea—such as the RESTORE Act—then let's do it.

There is a provision in the bill that helps our rural counties use the proceeds from timber sales for their schools—this is so critical—and for their local governments. One could argue it is not part of the transportation program, but it is a consensus. It is a coming together, and where we can do that it is very important we stick with those consensus items and stay away from the highly charged controversies. We have plenty of time for that. We don't have to put that into this conference. So I look forward to the House naming their conferees so we can get this done.

I also want to say how important it is that we pass the Violence Against Women Act. This bill, which has 61 cosponsors—it is my understanding that is the case—is a strong bill, and it makes sure people who are the victims of violence are taken care of, and it continues a great program that was put together by then-Senator JOE BIDEN.

I remember it well because I was in the House at the time and then-Senator BIDEN, now Vice President BIDEN, doing such a great job, spoke to me and said: Congresswoman BOXER, would you be willing to carry the House version of the Violence Against Women Act? This was in the early 1990s. I looked at the bill, read the bill, and said I would be honored to do so. I was so proud to work with JOE BIDEN on this issue. We had worked together on coastal issues and now we worked together, at that time, on violence against women.

I was able to get a couple of the provisions passed—a couple of, I would say, smaller provisions passed: safety on campuses, campus lighting, and some other things. But the heart of the bill did not pass until I actually was over here in the Senate, when Senator BIDEN really picked up steam and drove that bill through. My understanding is that Senator SCHUMER—at that time in the House—picked up the bill and did the same in the House.

This has been the law of the land—the Violence Against Women Act—since the 1990s, so we don't need to have any arguments about it. I was very glad to hear Senator MCCONNELL say he didn't intend to have any arguments about it because in this bill we cover even more people: people who were brutalized, women who were brutalized, and it is very key.

I see my colleague, Senator HARKIN, has come to discuss a very important matter, a labor matter, and I would tell him I will finish in about 3 minutes, if that is OK with him.

I want to conclude by saying that the Violence Against Women Act is what we call a no-brainer. It is a serious problem in our Nation. Senator REID said three women are killed every day because of violence against women.

The shelters in our States are doing incredible work. They take in women and children. They make sure there is protection and crack down on the violators and there is no reason to argue about that.

The last thing I wanted to talk about in the last couple minutes goes to the heart of what Senator MCCONNELL said in his leader time. I have noticed that almost every time Senator MCCONNELL has a chance on the Senate floor he comes and attacks President Obama and he goes after President Obama and blames him for everything under the sun. I have to say I support Senator MCCONNELL's right to say whatever he wants to say. He has every right to use his leadership powers to attack the President and do it as much as he wants. So I am not complaining about that. But I am just saying it is very unfortunate for this country that the Republican leader in the Senate said, and I quote—I am not quoting directly the words, but this is what he said—that his highest priority was making President Obama a one-term President, and he is carrying it out on the floor of this Senate.

The things he blames this President for are unbelievable. The way he attacks the President for being out around the country—he doesn't attack the Republican candidates for President for traveling around the country. Let's face it, it is a few months to the election. Does he expect the President to stay in the White House? I am glad the President is getting outside. I am glad the President is making speeches. I am glad the President is fighting for students. I am glad the President is fighting for senior citizens. I am glad the President is fighting for small busi-

ness. I am glad he is fighting for fairness. Why should a billionaire pay a lower tax rate than a secretary? I am glad this President is doing all that. To hear him attacked day after day after day is absolutely discouraging when we have so much work we can do that we can talk about in our leader time. But I have decided I am going to follow this, and every time Senator MCCONNELL does this I am going to use my privileges as a Senator to come down.

Let's never forget, this President inherited the worst economy since the Great Depression from a Republican President who left us bleeding 800,000 jobs a month, who left us with an auto industry flat on its back, who left us with a credit system that was frozen. This President, through his leadership, stepped up and led us out of that mess. The other voices, the naysayers, said: Let Detroit go bankrupt. Stay out of everything. This President didn't listen because he is a fighter for change.

If this floor is going to be used to attack this President, count me in to stand and make sure the record is set straight. I hope we can go back to the work we need to do instead of using the floor of this great body to attack our President, the President of the United States of America. Everyone has a right to do it. Believe me, I don't argue that. But I also have the right as a Senator—and so do others—to come to clear the record on that, and I intend to do that.

I yield the floor.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE NLRB RELATING TO REPRESENTATION ELECTION PROCEDURES—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 36, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 36, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the National Labor Relations Board relating to representation election procedures.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be 2 hours of debate, equally divided, between the leaders or their designees on the motion to proceed.

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I yield such time to the Senator from South Carolina as he may need.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I would like to thank the Senator from Wyoming for yielding but, more importantly, for his leadership on the subject that brings us all to the floor.

The National Labor Relations Board has gotten a lot of attention lately and