

the middle-class tax cut, to working Americans by giving them more money to put in their pocket to spend and drive the economy forward.

However, we must not continue the payroll tax cut of the last 2 years because of the threat it poses to the integrity of Social Security. Two years ago, to help middle-class families through tough times, we reduced the amount they paid into Social Security by 2 percent, from 6.2 percent to 4.2 percent. In order to make up for that, we put money from the general fund into the Social Security trust fund. It is the first time we have ever done that. I said it was wrong, and I still say it is wrong. We then extended it for 1 year until the end of this year. I thought that would be the end of it. Now I am hearing voices say we ought to extend this payroll tax cut.

Two of the critical strengths of Social Security are that it is universal and it is self-funded. No dollar paid in benefits comes from any source other than the payroll tax. As such, Social Security does not add one dime to our deficit. Again, that fact alone is a strong argument for those of us defending Social Security from misguided attempts to cut the system in the name of deficit reduction.

I have often argued that Social Security doesn't add one dime to the deficit. It never has. However, if we are taking money out of the general fund, which we know is borrowed money, and we are putting that into the trust fund, then the trust fund is now taking money that is borrowed. No longer can we say every dime paid out of that is from the payroll tax since it is coming from the general fund. I think we made a mistake 1 year ago by extending it. Now it is the time to end it. It must not be extended. I, for one, will do whatever I can as a Senator to stop the extension of the payroll tax cut in order to help solve the deficit and in order to help middle-class families.

How can we help middle-class families? It is very easy. First of all, pass the tax cut extension that we have sitting before the House. Secondly, rather than cutting payroll taxes by 2 percent, we should put in place a modified version of the Making Work Pay tax credit that we did under the American Recovery Reinvestment Act. That credit provided working Americans with \$400 per person, \$800 per couple in 2009 and in 2010. We can adjust that credit and double it to \$1,600 per couple to replace the payroll tax cut. So as we put the 2 percent back to where everyone pays back in at 6.2 percent, what we do on the other side is provide for a Making Work Pay tax credit that goes to people who are working. Obviously, no one gets the 2-percent payroll tax cut if they are not working. The Making Work Pay tax credit would also go to those who are working and make it a similar amount of money as they had on the Social Security payroll tax fund. This would have a greater bang for the buck because it would better

target working Americans of modest means who tend to spend more of what they get back.

I will clarify what I mean by that. Under the Social Security payroll tax cut—the 2-percent cut—the maximum amount of money someone would get would be at the highest level they paid into Social Security, which is approximately \$110,000 on a payroll of \$110,000. So that person would get \$2,200 back. That is for someone making at least \$110,000 a year. If someone is making \$20,000 a year, they would only get \$400 back. So the higher your income, the more they get back; the lower the income, the less they get back. It is just topsy-turvy. It should be the other way around. There should be more benefits to lower income and less benefits to higher income.

With this tax credit, that is what we do. More would go to people who are making \$40,000, \$50,000 \$60,000, \$70,000, \$80,000 a year than to those higher income people. That is why the Making Work Pay tax credit is much better than extending the Social Security payroll tax.

We are at a turning point in our economy. We can either move forward with an agenda that will strengthen the middle class or be dragged backward by misguided policies that consign us to additional decades of unequal growth and stagnant wages for working families.

I stand ready to work with my Senate colleagues to reduce the deficit and debt but not at the expense of hard-working, middle-class families who make this country the great country it is.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I ask to speak as in morning business.

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

(The remarks of Mr. CORKER pertaining to the introduction of S. 3673 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. CORKER. So I thank the chair. I yield the floor, and I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Oregon will suspend.

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask my friend to yield for a unanimous consent request and then he can have the floor as soon as I am finished.

Mr. MERKLEY. Absolutely.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 4310

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate receives the papers with respect to H.R. 4310, the Senate's passage of H.R. 4310, as amended, be vitiated; that adoption of the Senate amendment be vitiated; that the amendment, the text of S. 3254, as amended by the Senate, be modified with the changes that are at the desk; that no other amendments be in order, and the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the amendment, as modified; that if the substitute amendment, as modified, is agreed to, H.R. 4310, as amended, be read a third time and passed; finally, that the previous request with respect to the Senate's request for conference, including the appointment of conferees, be agreed to; with all of the above occurring with no intervening action or debate.

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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that we be in a period of morning business until 5 p.m. today.

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

Mr. REID. Madam President, of course, Senators should be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. REID. I extend my appreciation to my friend, the Senator from Oregon.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I rise today to address a critical issue for Oregon's farmers and ranchers.

If we turn the clock back from the most recent national disaster; that is, this terrible Hurricane Sandy that impacted New York and New Jersey and other areas, last summer we had another significant disaster, the worst wildfires to hit the State of Oregon since the 1800s and the worst wildfires in over a century. These wildfires devastated land and livestock. Yet our communities have been left stranded, without the protections they normally have, because of the inaction of the House and the Senate.

The Long Draw Fire in Malheur County burned 557,000 acres. Let's translate that. That is 900 square miles of land. The Miller Homestead Fire burned 160,000 acres or 250 square miles.

We have had many folks coming to the floor to discuss the terrible consequences of natural disasters. It was not long ago that I was on this floor, before Hurricane Sandy, calling for urgent, immediate action. But the challenge is that these emergency programs designed to respond to the ranchers and farmers who have lost so much land, so much forage in Oregon, those measures are in the farm bill.

Never before has the farm bill been unfinished, unaddressed, while Congress took their month-long break in August. Yet there it is. We came back and here we are and we still have no action from the House. We can't have a conference committee because the House hasn't acted. We can't address the changes in the House bill because the House hasn't acted. And who is paying the price? Farmers and ranchers, devastated by the worst wildfires in over 100 years.

Now, let me be clear. I would prefer that we pass the farm bill. But we have not. And we cannot control what the other Chamber is doing. If we do not get these key disaster relief programs, ranchers and farmers who have lost livestock or grazing land in these wildfires will be left with few options. That is wrong. A rancher in southeast Oregon who has already been devastated by the wildfire should not pay the price because the U.S. House of Representatives will not bring the farm bill to the floor. There are farmers all across the country who have been hit hard by drought. They, too, are held hostage. They need disaster assistance.

Well, very soon we are going to be talking about a very substantial disaster bill, and it is appropriate that we will be doing so. I will be supporting it because the devastation that has been wrought in States such as New Jersey and New York is exceptional, and we as a nation need to hold hands with the citizens of these States. We need to help them restore their lives and rebuild. But we need to hold hands in partnership with the ranchers and farmers in Oregon who have been devastated by these wildfires as well.

So if the House has not acted on the farm bill when we come to this floor to address relief for those impacted by Hurricane Sandy, then I am going to ask all my colleagues to work with me in the same partnership in which we supported folks in the South after Katrina, the same partnership we will have in supporting the folks in the Northeast due to the consequences of Hurricane Sandy, to support the ranchers and farmers of Oregon who have been so devastated by these worst ever fires.

I yield the floor.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ISAKSON. I defer to the lovely lady from Maryland.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland is recognized.

TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING SENATORS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I rise to comment about some wonderful

men in the Senate who are retiring on both sides of the aisle. Earlier today I spoke about my deep affection and sorry-to-see-go friends OLYMPIA SNOWE and KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON, but I want to rise as the dean of the women in the Senate to say some very special words about very special men on both sides of the aisle. Because when I came to the Senate, it was only Nancy Kassebaum and myself, and yet we worked on so many issues together. There are really wonderful men here who supported me, supported our issues, but really stood up for those States and their communities.

DANNY AKAKA

I want to say goodbye, aloha, to my very good friend DANNY AKAKA, a wonderful man with whom I have served in both the House and the Senate. He has been a real advocate not only for the people of Hawaii but, wow, the way he stood up for the Federal workforce, the civil servants who do such a great job, the outstanding job he has done on the Veterans' Committee.

Lives are better off, particularly for our veterans. I want to say a wonderful goodbye and give a hug to him because he demonstrates that you do not have to be loud to be powerful.

DICK LUGAR

I also wish to pay tribute to someone on the other side of the aisle, my very good friend and someone I admire tremendously, Senator DICK LUGAR from Indiana. Who does not admire Senator LUGAR, a gentleman, a scholar, I might even add a Rhodes Scholar, a definite advocate for Indiana, an incredible thought leader on foreign policy.

I am so proud of him and the work he did and the way he reached across the aisle to work with our colleague Senator Sam Nunn on their famous Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program. They truly worked together to begin to end the threat of weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union and made the world a better and safer place.

We want to wish Senator LUGAR a fond farewell and let him know he will be deeply missed. I certainly will miss him. I valued his thought, his counsel, his observations, particularly in the area of foreign policy. He taught me a little bit about foreign policy too.

JEFF BINGAMAN

I also want to say a goodbye to our friend JEFF BINGAMAN of New Mexico, someone who has also brought intellectual rigor, a lawyer's insistence on thoroughness, and a real commitment to people. It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with him on the HELP Committee, especially on the Affordable Care Act. I was proud to support all that he did, particularly in developing and focusing on the health workforce for the future.

I knew I could count on JEFF in the committee and on the floor as one of those men whom I refer to as a Gallahad, where men of quality always supported us women as we sought

equality. Our initiatives to end discrimination against women in health care and in the workplace were some of our proudest achievements in working together.

JON KYL

I also wish to comment about JON KYL. I have worked across the aisle from JON KYL and I have been seated across the table from him at everything from Bible study groups to the Senate Intelligence Committee. We studied the words of the Bible together to make ourselves better, and we worked in our committees to make the world better.

We lived through September 11 and the terrible attacks that occurred in our country and the anthrax attacks in our offices. With his steady leadership, his resourceful mind, his can-do know-how, we worked together to get the job done. I was delighted to be able to work with him in a way that called forth our highest and better selves to look out for our country. I wish him the best in his journey.

KENT CONRAD

I wish to comment too about KENT CONRAD. Wow, what a numbers guy. Those charts—I loved those charts. But we have many other things in common besides a love of charts. We love baseball. We love the Baltimore Orioles and, I might add, an occasional polka at Blob's Beer Garden in Maryland. Now you know KENT. He looks like Clark Kent. And he is a Superman when it comes to the budget. But, wow, when they played "Roll Out the Barrel," he was quite a hooper.

Most of all, what I admired about him is the way he breathed life into the numbers. He not only wanted a more frugal government, but he was also passionate and compassionate about how we could use the power of the purse to improve the world and at the same time maintain sensible spending standards.

I am going to look forward to seeing him with or without his charts and maybe in a dugout.

BEN NELSON

I wish also to say goodbye to BEN NELSON of Nebraska, a brother appropriator. We salute him for his work for the people of Nebraska and the Nation. Using those committee assignments on Appropriations, Agriculture, and Armed Services, he looked out for rural communities and he stood up for men and women in the military. I knew he took it as a personal responsibility, the issues around personnel for our military, that they had the right pay, the right equipment, and we protected their benefits.

HERB KOHL

A comment about HERB KOHL, another brother appropriator, the very essence of civility. He brought a businessman's savvy with a deep compassion and commitment to the people of Wisconsin. Now we all know the Kohl family. They own basketball teams, they own department stores. I tell you,