

agenda. Then this tax credit was most recently extended in 2009 as part of President Obama's Recovery Act. So renewable energy has enjoyed long-standing bipartisan support, and the wind tax credit has been a great success.

The cost of wind power has fallen dramatically, as the Presiding Officer knows. It has fallen dramatically over the years. For example, GE's wind power costs have dropped from 15 cents per kilowatt hour to near 5 cents in the last 10 years. Wind is becoming cost competitive with fossil fuels. On some days, it is the cheapest electricity available. Let me repeat that because that is important because we hear arguments out there that this is expensive. But on some days, it is the cheapest electricity available.

The Department of Energy estimates we could receive 20 percent of our electric power from wind alone by 2030. But we need to stay the course and support a policy with proven benefits. We will not need this incentive forever, but we should not eliminate it overnight. Wind resources are widely available in the West, the Midwest, and often offshore.

Support of the wind tax credit is diverse. Wind power benefits a wide variety of Americans: farmers and ranchers who lease their land, tax revenues for rural school districts, iron workers, steel workers and engineers and everyone who wants to breathe clean air. Other countries—China, India, Japan, and Germany—see these benefits too. They also want the job growth. They also want the energy security. They are acting aggressively to take leadership of the clean energy economy.

Our workers and entrepreneurs can compete with anyone on a level playing field. But the Congress is tying one hand behind their backs by leaving important incentives such as this in jeopardy. Let us continue the bipartisan support for the wind tax credit. Let us work together and get the job done for our economy, for our energy independence. Let us continue to invest in clean energy.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I rise for one final time to address the Senate. My remarks will be brief. Actually, I just want to say one thing: Thank you. I wish I could say it with the eloquence of one of my first friends in the Senate, Senator Dale Bumpers, who told his stories and always made his case pacing these aisles like a lion tethered to

a specially made, extra long microphone cord, or with the breadth of vision of the late Senator Robert C. Byrd, who sprinkled his classic Mother's Day or Fourth of July speeches with memorized poetry and his vast command of history, or with the fire of my dear friend, the late Senator Ted Kennedy, who would bellow to the rafters his passion for the America that could be and then call on the Senate to make it so.

What a privilege it has been to serve with such men and so many other men and women who have made up this body over the last 24 years. You have been my friends, advisers, sometimes adversaries, always worthy, and my inspiration. I thank you. My colleagues in this body are, to a man or a woman, thoughtful, hard-working patriots. We do not always agree, understandably. But every Senator I have met is pursuing a course he or she believes is best for the Nation and advocating policies he or she believes are best for their States.

When I have come to any of you with my ideas about what is best for the Nation or my State, you have listened respectfully, counseled wisely, and helped whenever you could, and so I thank you.

The Senate is often referred to as a family, and that is certainly how I feel about my staff, many of whom are gathering today to say our goodbyes. Perhaps what I will miss the most on leaving the Senate is coming to work every day in Washington and in Wisconsin with such a bright, creative, and dedicated group of people constantly focused on what is best for our Nation and my State, challenging and pushing me to be the best Senator I could be. You cannot be a cynic about the future of this country when you work in an office such as mine and have the privilege to interact with generations of intelligent, civic-minded, and loyal staffers.

I thank them all for making a hard job not just easy but enjoyable and for serving the people of Wisconsin tirelessly and exceedingly well.

My final thanks go to the extraordinary people of Wisconsin. Thank you for letting me pay back, in part, the great debt my family owes to the State that took in my immigrant mother and father and allowed our family, including my brothers, Sidney and Allen, and our sister Dolores, to grow and thrive. Thank you for taking a chance on me in that first election 24 years ago and renewing my contract three more times. Thank you for trusting me with your problems and concerns, your hopes and dreams.

Please know we have listened to you carefully and fought for you always. Every Wisconsinite who wanted it, Democrat or Republican, rich or poor, farmer or city dweller, got full consideration in my office. Whether it was arranging a Capitol tour, finding a lost Social Security check, pushing for legislation to reform the Federal dairy

program or reviving the shipbuilding industry in Marinette, WI, every Wisconsinite had an ally and an advocate in us.

It has been the greatest honor of my life to serve these 24 years in this hallowed institution, alongside my fellow Senators and my staff and as the voice for the people of Wisconsin. For that, I thank you all one last time.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN of Ohio). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, with the close of the 112th Congress, our good friend and colleague Senator HERB KOHL is retiring after four terms of dedicated service to this body, the people of Wisconsin and the United States. As a Senator, HERB KOHL has shown the same dedication and work ethic that previously allowed him to build his family-owned business into a nationally known brand name. Indeed, during his 24 years in this body, he has been a classic workhorse Senator, as opposed to a show horse Senator. Few Senators have been more willing to shun the limelight and share the credit in order to get important things done for the people of this country.

Senator KOHL is also a proud and principled progressive. His work in the Senate brings to mind the great words of the late Senator Hubert Humphrey:

The moral test of government is how its government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.

Senator KOHL has been respected as a leading advocate on children's issues. For instance, he authored legislation to expand the school breakfast program and has been a strong supporter of child nutrition programs. He also authored legislation requiring that handguns be sold with separate child safety locks.

Of course, as chair of the Special Committee on Aging, he has led the charge in the Senate on issues affecting older Americans, something especially important in my State of Iowa.

In particular, I salute Senator KOHL for authoring the Physician Payment Sunshine Act, which was included in the Affordable Care Act. The Sunshine Act, which was the focus of a series of hearings chaired by Senator KOHL, will require transparency and disclosure on payments made to doctors and surgeons by drug and medical device companies.

Senator KOHL has been our leader in improving the safety and quality of nursing homes, ensuring criminal background checks for employees in nursing homes, and working with CMS to institute new and meaningful quality ratings for nursing homes.

Senator KOHL and I worked together, in my capacity as chair of the Health,

Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, on legislative reform of the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation and its outside board.

Senator KOHL also deserves enormous credit for his committee's in-depth hearings and reports identifying financial scams and abuses targeting seniors and the elderly.

HERB KOHL is a good friend, and he has been an outstanding Senator. He has accomplished many things during his four terms in the Senate. But I can think of no greater accolade than to say, simply, that HERB KOHL is a good, decent, honorable person with a passion for social and economic justice and a determination to make life better for ordinary Americans.

I join with the entire Senate family in wishing HERB the very best in the years ahead.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I wish to rise to express my deep sadness about the events in Michigan. Denied the chance to participate in their own government, Michigan workers have been the victims of backroom political trickery, and they have lost much in a short period of time. It is also a sad day, however, for our entire country because Michigan is only the latest battleground in a much larger war on workers' rights. If we lose this great battle, the casualty will be the American middle class.

I have always said and believe that strong unions are the foundation of a strong middle class. When union membership was at its peak in this country, we all grew together. The middle class grew and prospered. Everyone, from the richest CEO to the minimum wage worker, benefited from our Nation's prosperity when labor union organization was at its peak.

Michigan's economy has always been a shining example of that shared prosperity, where an autoworker who put in a hard day's work could earn enough not only to buy one of the cars he made but to buy a house, send his kids to college, take a nice vacation, have a good retirement, and live the American dream.

As unions have declined in this country, the middle class has suffered. Those at the top earn more and more, while ordinary working people are seeing the American dream slip out of their reach.

It is not just union workers who are losing ground because unions don't only benefit their members. They benefit each and every American worker, regardless of whether one has ever held a union card. It is unions that fought for all the things we sort of take for granted. It is unions that fought for the 40-hour work week, a fair minimum wage, laws against discrimination, and laws that keep workers safe on the job. It is unions that are fighting today for Medicare, Social Security, job training, and other programs that help working families succeed.

I think it is important to go back to, truly the founding father, if you will, of the American labor movement, Samuel Gompers. He was asked once, "What does labor want?" Here is what he said:

What does labor want?

We want more school houses and less jails; more books and less arsenals; more learning and less vice; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge; in fact, more of the opportunities to cultivate our better natures.

That was Samuel Gompers, and he went on to say:

Where trade unions are most firmly organized, these are the rights of the people most respected.

Historically, we know that is true. Perhaps, most important now, America's labor unions are the last remaining voice strong enough to speak out for those who are not rich and not powerful. That is why they are under attack. Unions are under attack because they are one of the few remaining groups strong enough to stand up to the powerful, the very wealthy interests that want to run our country and ship our jobs overseas.

Last Thursday, Governor Snyder of Michigan called a press conference with the Republican leaders in the Michigan House and Senate and announced their plans to force through a change in Michigan laws for the so-called right-to-work law.

By the end of that same day, Republicans had introduced and passed right-to-work bills. There was no real debate. There were no hearings. To make matters worse, they manipulated the process to prevent the voters in Michigan from ever reviewing their actions. Why do I say that? Because Michigan law allows voter referendums on most laws but has an exception for appropriations bills. So the Republicans in the legislature attach their antilabor provisions to an appropriations bill to deny voters in Michigan the chance to even be heard on it.

But here is the key thing about the American people, when we are fighting for our families and our children's future, we will not be bullied, nor will we be silenced. This week's events in Michigan illustrate this so powerfully. Ordinary working people with bills to pay, kids to feed, and worries on their minds are taking time out of their busy lives to stand together, shoulder to shoulder, to say enough is enough.

This is not, again, just about organized labor. There are huge stakes for the middle class in the ongoing Republican assault on the right of American workers to organize and bargain collectively. There is a very direct connection between this war on unions and the harsh reality that American workers' incomes have effectively stagnated and even declined in recent decades, even as corporate profits have skyrocketed.

In an important column earlier this week, the Nobel Prize-winning economist, Paul Krugman, points out that

even as the economy has struggled, corporate profits are at an alltime high. Moreover, as Professor Krugman points out, "profits have surged as a share of national income, while wages and labor compensation are down. The pie isn't growing the way it should—but capital is doing fine by grabbing an ever-larger slice, at labor's expense."

As this chart shows, corporate profits have been rising rapidly for a decade in dollar terms, but wages have been stagnant, barely keeping up with inflation over time. In dollar terms, total wages have been increasing slightly, but that is because of inflation and the size of the workforce. A growing number of workers are dividing up their share of the pie. But corporate profits have been skyrocketing, almost tripling over a decade. Therefore, the worker's share gets smaller and smaller.

This is what this second chart shows. It is kind of a little confusing, so I will explain it. If we look at a longer period of time in terms of the gross domestic product, what we see is that from the 1950s till 2000, wages and corporate profits moved back and forth relative to each other. But since the 1980s, we see a picture of corporate profits increasing and exploding over the last decade. At the same time, wages and salaries have been on a steady downward slope as the economy has grown. As I said, this pattern has accelerated dramatically over the past decade.

So let's take a look and try to make some sense out of this chart. Here are wages as a percent of the gross domestic product. If we look back at the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, up to about 1980, we will see that labor's share was right around 50 percent, give or take a little bit—right around 50 percent of GDP—and corporate profits basically kept in line with its share. Beginning in 1980, wages—the red line—started going down and corporate profits started their huge climb. But for the recession, where they took a dip, we can see the huge increase now in corporate profits as a percent of GDP has more than doubled from its low point in the recession of a decade ago. It has reached its highest point in over 70 years. Wages have fallen down to below 44 percent of GDP.

So as a percent, we can see that corporate profits have skyrocketed but not wages, and this is what is happening: More and more of the pie is going to corporate profits, and less and less is going to wages. That is the squeeze that is going on. If we look at unions and trade unions during this same period of time, we see, beginning right in here—beginning early in the 1980s, right in here—the huge attack on organized labor, the eroding of labor's rights in many ways, and so wages started going down.

These are not just wages of union people. These are wages of all working people—all working people. That is why I say it is not just union members who have benefited from the strength of organized labor; everyone in the