

We have the chance and the responsibility to transition into a clean energy economy and leave our world in better shape than we found it.

I yield the floor for Senator BLUMENTHAL.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I wish to join with my two very good friends and colleagues who have highlighted an issue that concerns the whole country, not just Hawaii, Rhode Island—and no two States are farther apart geographically—but we share this very dire and dangerous problem, often characterized as climate change. I think it is climate disruption. It is global destruction.

One of the myths that surrounds this area that my two colleagues have sought to expose is the supposed incompatibility of reducing destruction of our planet and, at the same time, growing our economy. Often, economic growth is thought to be in conflict with environmental protection and responsibility.

In fact, ecology and economy go together. We can expand our economy by developing new sources of fuel, renewables such as wind and solar, but also fuel cells, which in my State of Connecticut are a growing source of energy responsibility and economic growth.

Far from being incompatible, these two goals are complementary. More jobs, more economic growth, can be the result of controlling carbon pollution.

In fact, the President's program for controlling carbon pollution, which would dramatically cut the magnitude of our air contamination and make us a more responsible nation, will increase jobs and economic growth. It will also put us in a position of leadership around the globe and enable us to regain the position of trust and leadership that we have exercised on so many other issues. We cannot be a leader if we don't lead ourselves.

We cannot tell others what to do when we don't follow the example that we should be setting. It should be and it must be leadership by example.

My colleague Senator MURPHY and I—and he will be shortly speaking about another subject—brought together a very powerful coalition in Connecticut last week to highlight this issue of climate change and to dramatize how many different interests and ages have commonality in this goal: labor leaders, environmental activists, young people wearing T-shirts and carrying signs.

They get it. They know. The science is there. The reality is pressing, urgent, and we must address it.

I wish to thank all of my colleagues who are uniting on this historic cause. I hope we can join together in colloquies going forward.

The Presiding Officer has been a leader in the House and will be now in the Senate; most especially, my friend and colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE, who literally week after week, in many different themes and widely diverse ways, has brought our attention, riveting our minds, on this very impor-

tant subject. I congratulate him on the 40th speech, and I look forward to participating more with him.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I look forward to that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). The Senator from Connecticut.

### GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. MURPHY. On July 20, a few days ago, we had a pretty somber anniversary in this country. Senator BENNET came down to acknowledge the occasion. It was the 1-year anniversary of the shooting in Aurora, CO, in which a young man killed 12 individuals and wounded 58 others when he walked into a crowded movie theater at a midnight showing of "The Dark Knight Rises." This, once again, showed the vulnerability of this Nation when the Congress refuses to act on the issue of preventing gun violence.

I have come down virtually every week—not, frankly, as often or as regularly as Senator WHITEHOUSE has on the issue of climate change, but in the short time I have been in the Senate I have tried to come down to the floor virtually every week to talk about the victims of gun violence. Today it is an apt moment to recognize the victims in Aurora, who now have been lost for over a year.

This number represents something different. On December 14, our world in Connecticut was absolutely shattered by a global tragedy in which 26 people, adults and children, including 7-year-olds, died in a splatter of gunfire at Sandy Hook Elementary School, as well as six of the professionals who were charged with protecting them.

What has happened since December 14 is, frankly, in a lot of ways even more egregious, even more unconscionable, even more difficult to swallow than what happened on that day, and that is that 6,497 people have died from guns since December 14 in, frankly, every manner.

There have been more mass shootings, accidental deaths, and suicides. There have been instances of one-on-one urban violence, suburban violence, and family-on-family violence. What has happened is this country has become kind of numb to it. We have to accept that every day we are going to be able to pick up a paper, and somewhere across this country there is going to be upward of 30 or 40 people who have died at the hands of guns at a rate that we can't find anywhere else in the civilized world. We just kind of accept it.

The number is startling. Since December 14, almost 6,500 people have died of gun violence. But we just can't settle on that number. We have to talk about who these people are. I am trying to lend some voice to the victims of gun violence every week on the floor of the Senate to try to spur the Senate to action because I have become resolved that the numbers aren't enough.

Apparently, this number isn't big enough for the Senate to do something so that maybe if we humanize these tragedies, that might do the trick.

A.J. Boik was described as a ball of joy by his friend Jordan. He had just graduated from high school, and he was looking forward to attending the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design in the fall. He wanted to be an art teacher and wanted to teach others the joy he felt for art.

He was known as a big personality, so much so that after he was killed in that movie theater in Aurora, over 1,000 people came to his funeral. Among those mourners were his girlfriend who was there in the theater the day he was shot.

Matthew McQuinn was one of the heroes that day. He was there with his girlfriend Samantha and her brother Nick Yowler. When the shooter came into the theater and started spraying bullets, Matthew, as well as Nick, attempted to shield Samantha from the bullets.

Samantha survived but Matthew did not. He was working in a Target, which is where he actually met his girlfriend when they were working at another Target. He was remembered by his co-workers very fondly. He died that day saving a life.

Also a victim that day was PO3 John Thomas Larimer. He was one of two Active-Duty servicemembers who died as a result of that mass shooting. His girlfriend Kelley Vojtsek, whose life was saved, said this:

John and I were seated in the middle area. When the violence occurred, John immediately and instinctively covered me and brought me to the ground in order to protect me from any danger.

In that act, he saved his girlfriend, but he was struck with a bullet that ended his life.

Alex Sullivan was 27 years old. His friends called him a gentle giant. He was ringing in his 27th birthday, in fact, by going to the premier of "The Dark Knight Rises." His family said he always had a glowing smile on his face. He made friends with everybody. He was a huge movie buff, a comic book geek—as his family called him—and the New York Mets. The Sunday following his attack would have been his 1-year wedding anniversary.

Micayla Medek was called Cayla by her friends. She loved her friends and going out with her friends. That is what she was doing when she went out that evening to see this movie. Her family didn't find out she had been killed that day until 20 hours after the shooting. They had spent that evening and morning driving from hospital to hospital hoping to get news she had survived.

Veronica Moser-Sullivan was the youngest of the 12 people who were shot. She was 6 years old, not unlike the 20 6-year-old and 7-year-old children killed in Newtown. She was described as beautiful and innocent, excited about life. She was there that

evening because her family wanted to get her mind off of the recent passing of her grandfather. She had become consumed with sorrow over the passing of her grandfather. So as a treat her family brought her to the premier of this movie. She was going to start swimming lessons the following week.

James Holmes walked into that movie theater with an AR-15-style rifle, which we have heard talked about over and over and over—the weapon of choice in mass shootings in this country. But just as important, he was armed with 100-round drums of ammunition. Why on Earth does this Senate allow for the continued legal sale of 100-round drums of ammunition? What possible legal reason could there be for the possession of 100-round drums of ammunition that go into an automatic weapon other than to kill as many people as possible as quickly as possible? There is no reason a hunter or sport shooter needs a 100-round drum of ammunition. Yet we can't even get the votes to ban the sale of those deadly accessories to semiautomatic weapons.

I get it. These 6,497 people didn't die at the hands of an assault weapon, they didn't die at the hands of a 100-round drum, never mind a 30-round magazine, but these mass shootings are going to continue to happen. Frankly, the one that happened in Santa Monica not long ago barely made the headlines in this country. Three or four people dying at the hands of a semiautomatic weapon is nothing these days. Now there have to be 20 or 30 people die in order for it to be a big story. Expectations have changed because these shootings are becoming regular, normal occurrences. But we can't let this country become numb to mass shootings in the way I would argue we have become numb to the 6,500 people who have died since December 14.

I understand we tried and failed to get legislation passed through the Senate—supported by 90 percent of Americans—that would extend background checks to more sales of weapons, to make sure criminals don't have weapons, to make gun trafficking a crime in a way that it is not, to provide some more mental health resources, but we shouldn't give up. We shouldn't give up because there is going to be another Aurora, there will be another Sandy Hook if we do nothing, and 30 to 40 people will still die every day if we stand by and continue to allow this kind of regular, everyday gun violence to be the background noise of this Nation.

Maybe if the numbers don't move people, the stories of the victims will. Maybe that will be enough to finally prompt the Senate and the House of Representatives to action.

I yield the floor.

#### THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 4 years ago today, the Federal minimum wage increased to \$7.25 per hour. That was the final phase of a minimum wage in-

crease that Congress passed in 2007. After 4 years, it is time to evaluate where wages stand.

Since 1967, the Federal minimum wage has increased from \$1.40 to \$7.25. While at first glance this seems like significant progress, when adjusted to current dollars the value of the minimum wage has actually declined by 12.1 percent. Had the minimum wage kept pace with inflation, it would be \$10.74 an hour today.

But the minimum wage for tipped workers is even worse. The current minimum wage for tipped workers is \$2.13, and that has not gone up since 1991. Employers paying the tipped minimum wage now pay just 21 percent of what that employee would make at minimum wage. This forces workers to use more and more of their tips simply to make up the difference between the tipped minimum wage and the standard minimum wage.

Working 40 hours per week at \$7.25 per hour translates to just \$15,080 per year. That's about \$400 less than the Federal poverty level guidelines for a family of two. Last week, The Atlantic ran an article that showed a budget chart produced by McDonald's to help its employees better manage their finances. And while I commend McDonald's for trying to help workers better manage money, the budget tells a sad story.

According to the chart, someone making the minimum wage and working 40 hours a week at McDonald's would have to work a second job to make ends meet. But to be clear for this budget to be accurate, a worker must hold nearly two full time jobs. According to the Washington Post's Wonkblog, a worker making the minimum wage would have to work 75 hours a week to have the after-tax income in the McDonald's sample budget. Working 75 hours a week at minimum wage with no vacation days and limited benefits—if any—one can make \$24,720 a year, after tax.

How does a person do that if they are a single parent? They can't. There are not enough hours in the day to raise a family working that many hours. And there certainly aren't enough dollars in the income to provide child care.

The sample budget drawn up for McDonald's employees might as well include a line for Federal and State assistance. Families living on the minimum wage have few alternatives but to turn to programs such as SNAP, housing assistance, and Medicaid to survive. These are the same programs that are regularly attacked by the ultra-conservative for growing too quickly. For those who insist that working be a requirement for receiving public assistance, shouldn't they also insist that if you are working full time you shouldn't need public assistance? Wouldn't that be a good definition of a minimum wage?

If we increase the minimum wage to \$10.10, more than 30 million workers would receive a raise. And while some

of these workers are teenagers, 88 percent are adults. For many of those adults, these are not part time jobs or stepping stones to their next job, but the full time job they rely on for a living.

That is why 4 years after the last minimum wage increase, it is time to act again. I am a cosponsor of the Fair Minimum Wage Act introduced by Senator HARKIN in the Senate and Representative GEORGE MILLER in the House. The Fair Minimum Wage Act will increase the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 per hour in three, 95-cent annual increments, and index it to inflation annually thereafter. The bill will also gradually raise the minimum wage for tipped workers from the current \$2.13 per hour to a level that is 70% of the regular minimum wage.

If we pass the Fair Minimum Wage Act that same full-time worker being paid minimum wage I mentioned earlier that makes \$15,080 a year—will make \$21,000. That can be the difference for a family that is getting by and one that is living in poverty. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join me in cosponsoring the Fair Minimum Wage Act.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, 4 years ago today, July 24, 2009, was the last time the minimum wage was increased. It rose from \$6.55 an hour to \$7.25 an hour. And it has been stuck there ever since. Four years is too long. It is time to raise the minimum wage.

To that end, I have introduced legislation along with Rep. GEORGE MILLER in the House. The Fair Minimum Wage Act will gradually increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour in three annual steps. Our bill will also link future increases in the minimum wage to the cost of living, using the Consumer Price Index, so that people who are trying to get ahead don't fall behind as our economy grows. Finally, our bill—for the first time in more than 20 years—will raise the minimum wage for workers who earn tips, from a paltry \$2.13 per hour, today, to a level that is 70 percent of the regular minimum wage. This will be gradually phased in over the course of 6 years, which will give businesses time to adjust while providing more fairness for hard-working people in tipped industries.

While millions of workers have been without a raise these past 4 years, costs have continued to climb. Between 2009 and 2012, rent has gone up 4%, auto repair costs have climbed 6%, food is 8% more expensive, child care costs 9% more, and public transportation takes a 13% bigger bite out of workers' wallets.

I do not need to tell you that when you are taking in \$1,000 a month, even a few dollars more at the grocery checkout line is a hardship. The tens of millions of working poor and low-wage Americans and their families know this. They know that the minimum wage, for many, is a poverty wage; it pays \$3,000 less per year than what is needed to lift a family of three above