

When she came to the White House, she created the Commission on Atrocities for President Obama to focus on that and see to it that it didn't happen again. It was through her leadership that she forced President Obama and the administration to engage in Libya and end what would have been a genocide in Libya by Muammar Qadhafi.

She is smart, she is intelligent, she is tough, and she has a Georgia tie of which I am very proud. She graduated from a high school in DeKalb County, GA, in the 1980s called Lakeside High School. She did an internship between her first and second year at Yale University in Atlanta, GA, for a sports broadcaster on a sports station in the city. He was asked a few days after she left to give some description of what kind of person Samantha Power was, and I want to read that quote because it reflects the kind of person we want representing us as an ambassador at the U.N. He said:

Oh, my God, was she bright. Acerbic, lightening-witted, and the depth of the Mariana Trench.

That is a quote from Jeff Hullinger, the first person she worked for in 1988.

Samantha Power is the right person, at the right time, to represent the right country in the U.N. on the Security Council. I commend her to the Senate and hope she receives a unanimous vote.

I yield back the remainder of my time and thank the Senator from Vermont.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont.

#### THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate hundreds and hundreds of young people throughout the country who are standing up for justice, who are putting a spotlight on one of the major economic crises facing this country.

Today—this week and in recent weeks—we have had young people in New York City, in Chicago, in Washington, DC, in St. Louis, in Kansas City, in Detroit, in Flint, MI, and other areas around this country who are fast-food workers—the people who work at Burger King and McDonald's and Popeye's; the ones who give us the hamburgers and the french fries—saying that workers all over this country cannot make it on \$7.25 an hour, \$7.50 an hour. Often they are unable even to get 40 hours of work and, in most cases, they get no or very limited benefits.

So all over the country these workers, often young people, are walking out of their establishments, their fast-food places, and are educating consumers about the economic injustice taking place in these fast-food establishments. What they are saying is that we need to raise the minimum wage in this country; that American workers cannot exist on \$7.25 an hour, which is the national minimum wage now, or \$8 an hour or \$9 an hour.

My own view is, at the very least, we should be raising the minimum wage to

\$10 an hour. Just do the arithmetic, with somebody making \$7.25 an hour, and if they are lucky enough to be getting 40 hours a week—and many workers are not.

I was in Detroit a couple of months ago talking to fast-food workers, and what they are saying is they get 20 hours a week in one place to make a living and then they have to work at another place. One young man I talked to is working at three separate locations, having to travel, in order to cobble together what, in fact, is by far less than a livable income. So just do the arithmetic. If you make \$7.25 an hour, and if you are lucky enough to be working 40 hours a week, you are making about \$15,000 a year. Then, of course, your Social Security taxes are coming out of that and your Medicare taxes are coming out of that, and maybe some local taxes. You can't survive on \$14,000 or \$15,000 a year.

The point is these fast-food workers are educating the Nation about the fact that hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people are working hard every single day and are falling further and further behind economically. We have to stand with them and we have to raise the minimum wage in this country.

While workers at fast-food establishments and other places such as Walmart are earning the minimum wage, I should mention that the CEOs of these large corporations are, in many cases, making exorbitant compensation packages. The CEO of Burger King, a corporation with over 191,000 mostly low-wage workers gave its CEO Bernardo Hees a 61-percent pay raise last year, boosting his total compensation to \$6.5 million in 2012.

Well, if a millionaire can get a 65-percent pay raise, maybe it is time to get a pay raise for the workers who are making \$7.25 an hour.

Last year, McDonald's, a corporation with over 850,000 mostly low-wage employees, more than tripled the compensation of its CEO Don Thompson. In 2011, Mr. Thompson received a mere, paltry \$4.1 million. But last year, because of his significant raise, the CEO of McDonald's received \$13.8 million.

Well, if Mr. Thompson can make \$13.8 million as the head of McDonald's, surely the workers at McDonald's can make at least \$10 an hour, not \$7.25 an hour, not \$8 an hour.

David Novak, the CEO of Yum! Brands—the owners of Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Long John Silvers—was paid \$11.3 million last year and received over \$44 million in stock options.

Well, if this company has enough money to give this gentleman \$44 million in stock options, maybe we can end starvation wages at Yum! foods.

In terms of the minimum wage, since 1968, the real value of the Federal minimum wage has fallen by close to 30 percent. The purchasing power of the minimum wage has gone down by some 30 percent since 1968. If the minimum

wage had kept up with inflation since 1968, it would be worth approximately \$10.56 per hour today.

The issue our young people working at these fast-food places are highlighting goes beyond the fast-food industry. The reality is that many of the new jobs being created in America today are low-wage jobs.

I think we all recognize, even some of my Republican colleagues understand, we have made significant economic gains since the collapse of the economy at the end of President Bush's tenure in 2008 when we were losing 700,000 jobs a month—an unsustainable reality, 700,000 jobs a month. Now we are gaining jobs, and that is a good thing, but not enough jobs. Unemployment remains much too high. Real unemployment today is close to 14 percent. But in the midst of understanding the job creation process in this country, we need to know that nearly two-thirds of the jobs gained since 2009 are low-wage jobs that pay less than \$13.80 an hour.

So the good news is we are now creating some jobs—not enough jobs; unemployment remains much too high—but we cannot lose track of the fact that most of the new jobs being created are not paying working people a living wage. While most of the new jobs being created are low-wage jobs, we should remember that nearly two-thirds of the jobs lost during the Wall Street recession were middle-class jobs that paid up to \$21 an hour. So the economic trend is not good. The Wall Street crash resulted in mass unemployment, and though we are gaining new jobs, many of the jobs we are gaining are low-wage jobs. Yet the jobs we have lost are higher wage jobs.

Also, while we discuss the state of the economy, let us never ever forget that middle-class families have seen their incomes go down by nearly \$5,000 since 1999, after adjusting for inflation.

Opponents, and there are many—the entire fast-food industry and all the big-money interests, the guys who make millions and millions of dollars a year, the people who have unbelievable pensions, who have all kinds of benefits, the CEOs—are working very hard to tell us in Congress not to raise the minimum wage, which is \$7.25. Among many other arguments they say: Well, if you raise the minimum wage, it is going to be a job killer. It will kill jobs.

Let me say this on a personal basis. I represent the State of Vermont. The State of Vermont has the third highest minimum wage in the country; it is \$8.60 an hour. Meanwhile, with an \$8.60-an-hour minimum wage, I am happy to say that the State of Vermont has the fourth lowest unemployment rate in the United States at 4.4 percent. And to be very honest, I have not bumped into many employers who tell me: I would be hiring more people if we lowered the minimum wage in Vermont. It does not happen. I think that is a bogus argument.

The State of Washington, if my memory is correct, has the highest minimum wage in the country. Their unemployment rate is lower than the national average.

There is another point I would like to make that needs to be made over and over. We talk a lot in this country about welfare reform. I think that in general, when people use that expression, what they are talking about is lower income people who may be breaking the law and taking advantage of programs for which they are not quite eligible.

Let me say a word about the need for welfare reform but in a somewhat different tone, and let me say that the biggest welfare recipient in this country happens to be the wealthiest family in the United States of America; that is, the Walton family, who owns Walmart, a family that is worth \$100 billion—more wealth, by the way, than the bottom 40 percent of the American people. The wealthiest family in America is the largest welfare recipient in America. How is that? Well, the reason they are so wealthy, the reason that family is worth \$100 billion is they make huge profits because they pay their workers starvation wages. But in order to keep their workers going, the taxpayers of this country—through Medicaid, through nutrition programs, through affordable housing—give assistance to Walmart so that their workers can keep coming to work. So somebody who works at Walmart for \$7.25 or \$8 an hour, more often than not their children are on Medicaid paid for by the taxpayers of this country. They and their kids are on food stamps paid for by the taxpayers of this country. Many of their employees live in affordable housing subsidized by the taxpayers of this country.

So the Walton family becomes the wealthiest family in this country while working-class and middle-class taxpayers provide assistance to their workers so they can continue going to work. Let me make the very radical suggestion that maybe the wealthiest family in America might want to pay their employees a living wage so that the taxpayers of this country do not have to subsidize them.

I would conclude by telling those young people in major cities around this country that many of us respect and appreciate the courage they are showing. It is not easy to walk out of a job when you don't have any money, because your employer may say: You are out of here; you are fired. But these young people have the courage to stand and say: No. We are human beings. We live in the greatest country on Earth. We have to earn a living wage. We can't make it on starvation wages.

So I thank those young people for standing for justice not only for themselves but for all Americans, and I hope that Members of Congress listen carefully to what they are saying and that we go forward as soon as possible in passing a minimum wage that will provide dignity for millions of workers.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. 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.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we know what is ahead of us the next hour or so. I ask unanimous consent that we change that.

In between the vote on Chen, the judge, and the next vote, I ask that there be 10 minutes, and 2 minutes of that would be 1 minute on each side, and 8 minutes would be given to the co-manager of that bill, SUSAN COLLINS. That would be for debate only.

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

#### THUD APPROPRIATIONS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, we have spent the last 2 weeks here on the Senate floor talking about our bipartisan transportation and housing bill. This is a bill that is all about creating jobs, investing in our families and in our communities, and laying down a strong foundation for a long-term and broad-based economic growth. This bill is not exactly a bill I would have written on my own. I know it is not exactly a bill Senator COLLINS would have written on her own. But it is a compromise bill that reflects the deep cuts we made when we set spending levels in the Budget Control Act as well as the best ideas from both sides of the aisle of ways we can improve and reform our transportation and housing investment.

The transportation and housing investments in this bill have a direct impact on the families and communities we represent, from improving our roads, to reducing traffic and helping Main Street businesses, to making sure our bridges are safe so we do not see more collapses like the one back home in my State of Washington, to supporting our most vulnerable families, seniors, and veterans with a roof over their heads when they need it the most and making investments in our communities that mayors across our country use to create local jobs in their hometowns and so much more.

Senator COLLINS and I worked very hard together to write a bipartisan bill to invest in programs that should not be partisan. I think we succeeded. Six Republicans voted for this bill in committee; 73 Senators voted to bring this bill to the floor for a debate. That debate was a full and open one, with amendments and votes from Democrats and Republicans.

I wish to personally thank Senator COLLINS for her hard work on this bill, and I also thank all of our staff on the appropriations subcommittee: Alex Keenan, Dabney Hegg, Meaghan McCarthy, Rachel Milberg, and Dan Broder; as well as the staff of Senator COLLINS, who spent endless hours: Heideh Shahmoradi, Kenneth Altman,

Jason Woolwine, and Rajat Mathur—all of whom worked so hard and put in so many hours and late nights on this strong bipartisan bill.

After 2 weeks of debate and discussion and a bipartisan bill before us, we are now going to move very shortly to a final vote. I want to be clear. This bill has the support of the majority of the caucus. In the House of Representatives, what did we see happen yesterday? They pulled their transportation and housing bill off the floor. The Republican leadership would not even allow a vote on their bill because they did not have a majority in their caucus. The chairman of the House Appropriations Committee said that showed that sequestration is unworkable and needs to be replaced. That is the House Republican chairman. But here in the Senate we have a majority, and we should move to pass this bill.

The only thing that can block the passage of this bill, the only way a bipartisan bill with the support of the majority could be stopped is if Republican leaders whip their own Members into filibustering a jobs and infrastructure bill that many of those Republicans actually support. That is the only way.

The choice before us is clear, and I urge my colleagues to make the right one. This vote is not about whether you support this exact bill or agree with the exact spending level. As Senator COLLINS has made clear again and again, you can think the spending level is too high and still support this process in which we pass a bill in the Senate and work with the House bill on a compromise. You can certainly disagree with the bill and not think it should be subjected to a filibuster.

The bottom line is that a vote to wrap up and vote on this bill is a vote for jobs and the economy and for bipartisan solutions to the problems facing our Nation. A vote to filibuster this bill is a vote for more gridlock, more obstruction, more partisanship, and more political games.

I know when I go home to Washington State I want to be able to tell my constituents that Democrats and Republicans worked together to solve some problems, help them, and grow the economy. I know there are many Democrats and Republicans here today who want to be able to say the same to their constituents, and I hope they will stand with me and Senator COLLINS and vote against a filibuster of our bipartisan bill.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Louisiana.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 101

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I stand today to discuss and strongly support my bill, S. 101, the State and Local Government Bailout Prevention Act. I urge all of us to unite to pass this bill