

Last December, Rebecca was hospitalized for three days after cutting her wrists because of what she said was bullying, according to the sheriff. Later, after Rebecca complained that she had been pushed in the hallway and that another girl wanted to fight her, Rebecca's mother began home-schooling her in Lakeland, a city of about 100,000 midway between Tampa and Orlando, Judd said.

This fall, Rebecca started at a new school, Lawton Chiles Middle Academy, and loved it, Judd said. But the bullying continued online.

"She put on a perfect, happy face. She never told me," Rebecca's mother, Tricia Norman, told the Lakeland Ledger. "I never had a clue. I mean, she told me last year when she was being bullied, but not this year, and I have no idea why."

After Rebecca's suicide, police looked at her computer and found search queries such as "what is overweight for a 13-year-old girl," "how to get blades out of razors," and "how many over-the-counter drugs do you take to die." One of her screensavers also showed Rebecca with her head resting on a railroad track.

Police said that she had met the North Carolina boy at an airport and that they had remained friends online. The 12-year-old boy didn't tell anyone about the "I'm jumping, I can't take it anymore" message he received from her on Monday morning, shortly before her suicide, authorities said.

Detectives said the other girls' parents have been cooperative.

Florida has a bullying law, but it leaves punishment to schools, not police. Legal experts said it is difficult to bring charges against someone accused of driving a person to suicide.

"We've had so many suicides that are related to digital harassment. But we also have free-speech laws in this country," Aftab said.

In a review of news articles, The Associated Press found about a dozen suicides in the U.S. since October 2010 that were attributed at least in part to cyberbullying. Aftab said she believes the real number is at least twice that.

In 2006, 13-year-old Megan Meier hanged herself in Missouri after she was dumped online by a fictitious teenage boy created in part by an adult neighbor, Lori Drew, authorities said. A jury found Drew guilty of three federal misdemeanors, but a judge threw out the verdicts and acquitted her.

Florida's law, the Jeffrey Johnston Stand Up for All Students Act, was named after a teenager who killed himself after being harassed by classmates. The law was amended July 1 to cover cyberbullying.

David Tirella, a Florida attorney who lobbied for the law and has handled dozens of cyberbullying cases, said law enforcement can also seek more traditional charges.

"The truth is, even without these school bullying laws, there's battery, there's stalking," he said.

[From the Tampa Bay Times, Sept. 12, 2013]
LAKELAND GIRL COMMITS SUICIDE AFTER
BEING BULLIED ONLINE
(The Ledger)

LAKELAND.—Investigators have identified at least 15 girls who were involved in the social media circle of a 12-year-old Lakeland girl who took her own life after more than a year of constant bullying.

At a news conference Thursday, Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd said it appears Rebecca Ann Sedwick jumped to her death at an old cement business after being beat down with hate messages online. Her body was found Tuesday.

During their investigation, detectives found multiple social media applications

where Sedwick was cyberbullied with messages, including "Go kill yourself," and "Why are you still alive?"

Sedwick was "absolutely terrorized on social media," Judd said.

The Sheriff's Office is investigating the cyberbullying, Judd said.

Judd said parents of all 15 girls have cooperated with detectives and several cellphones and laptops have been confiscated.

Before her death, Sedwick had searched questions online related to suicide, including "How many over-the-counter drugs do you take to die?" and "How many Advil do you have to take to die?"

The night before her death, Sedwick gave several warning signs about her planned suicide that were never reported for help.

Judd said a 12-year-old boy in North Carolina, whom Sedwick met through social media, knew of her plan. Sedwick messaged him only hours before her death saying she was dead and "I'm jumping, I can't take it anymore."

Sedwick also changed her name early Tuesday morning on the free messaging application, Kik Messenger, to "That Dead Girl."

Judd said detectives are trying to investigate the social media applications that Sedwick used, including Kik and Ask.fm, but many of the websites are based in other countries.

Florida has an antibullying law that covers cyberbullying. As the investigation continues, Judd said charges, including cyberstalking, could be filed.

He said it appears that the bullying started sometime in 2012 and was physical at her former school, Crystal Lake Middle School, and then moved completely online.

"We're trying to sort out a bunch of girl talk that goes further than girl talk," he said.

The investigation is still in its early stages, but Judd said there were warning signs that nobody noticed. If detectives can find evidence, the girls could be charged with felony cyberstalking because Sedwick was under 16 years old.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONFRONTING REALITIES

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, there is a lot of concern all over this country about what is going on in Washington in terms of the possibility that the United States, for the first time in its history, may not pay its debts and what that means to the American economy, what it means to the world economy, and what it means to the international financial system. There is a great deal of concern about the possibility that on October 1, the U.S. Government may shut down because we have some rightwing extremists in the House who want to, among other things, abolish legislation passed 4 years ago—the Affordable Care Act—and throw something else in there.

Before I get to those issues, I wish to speak about the reality of what is going on in the economy today. What I want to do is something that is not done often enough, and that is to ask where some of our rightwing colleagues are really coming from. What are their goals?

Fine, they want to shut down the government on October 1. OK, so they don't want to, for the first time in the history of America, pay our bills. But what else do they want? What is this rightwing ideology which has taken over the House? That is an issue that we do not talk about as much as we should.

I wish to begin my discussion by looking at the reality of what is going on in the American economy and why people are so angry and frustrated that the government is not responding to their needs—and they have every reason to be angry.

The Census Bureau reported the other day a rather extraordinary fact, a very depressing fact; that is, in terms of median family income—what the typical American family right in the middle of our economy is experiencing—that family made less money last year than it did 24 years ago. Twenty-four years have come and gone, people have worked so hard, and after 24 years they are now earning less money as a family than they did back in 1989.

Further, what the Census Bureau told us is the typical middle-class family has seen its income go down by more than \$5,000 since 1999, after adjusting for inflation. So if people are angry in New Mexico and if they are angry in California, that is why. They are working hard and their income is going down.

The average male worker made \$283 less last year than he did 44 years ago. How is that for progress? Less money last year, male worker, than 44 years ago. The average female worker earned \$1,700 less last year than she did in 2007—going down. A record-breaking 46.5 million Americans are now living in poverty. We have the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world, at almost 22 percent. A higher percentage of American kids live in poverty now than was the case in 1965. In other words, we are moving but we are moving in the wrong direction.

Meanwhile, the people on top, the wealthiest people in this country, are doing phenomenally well. That is the major point that has to be made over and over. This is not an earthquake or a tsunami that has hit everybody, we are all in this together and everybody is struggling. Not the case. The wealthiest people are doing phenomenally well.

Last week we learned that 95 percent of the new income generated in this country from 2009 to 2012 went to the top 1 percent. That is a phenomenal statistic. All of the new income generated—95 percent of it—went to the wealthiest 1 percent. Earlier this week

Forbes Magazine reported that the wealthiest 400 Americans in this country are now worth a record-breaking \$2 trillion. My colleagues can do the arithmetic. That is an extraordinary concentration of wealth in this country that we have not seen since before the Great Depression.

The richest 400 Americans now own more wealth than the bottom half of America—over 150 million Americans. One family—and this is not what I learned in the history books when I was growing up about what America was supposed to be like—but one family, the Walton family, owner of Walmart, owns more wealth than the bottom 40 percent of the American people. Corporate profits are at an all-time high while wages as a share of the economy are at a record low.

Wall Street, whose greed, recklessness, and illegal behavior caused this massive economic downturn—their CEOs, their executives, are doing phenomenally well. In fact, CEOs on Wall Street are on track to make more money this year than they did in 2009. Believe me, they have recovered, they are doing great, while the middle class of this country is disappearing.

That is an overview of the reality facing our country: The middle class is disappearing, poverty is at an all-time high, and the people on top are doing phenomenally well.

Now I wish to go from that reality to speak about what rightwing extremism is really about, and it is much more than shutting down the government; it is much more than not paying the debts we owe and causing a major financial crisis.

Let me suggest to my colleagues—and I think they already know—that if we delve into what some of our colleagues here in the Senate but mostly in the House believe, we will find what they believe is—forget the Affordable Care Act which they want to repeal; that is nickels and dimes—what they are really all about is repealing every significant piece of legislation passed in the last 80 years which protects the needs of the middle class, working families, the elderly, the kids, and lower income people. You name the piece of legislation, they either want to repeal it entirely or they want to make massive cuts in those programs.

Let me name what those programs are. Social Security. Some of them believe Social Security is unconstitutional. It is not just that they want to cut Social Security; they don't believe in the concept of Social Security.

The same thing with health care on the part of the Federal Government; Medicare, Medicaid. Why should the Federal Government be involved in those programs? That is not the role of the Federal Government. Let's abolish Medicare, abolish Medicaid. If a person is 70 years of age and they don't have a lot of money and no health insurance, which Medicare provides, what happens to them? My colleagues can tell me. What happens if you are 70 and you are

diagnosed with cancer and you don't have health insurance? Everybody knows the end of the story. You die. Well, that is the way life goes because we are all in it for ourselves. We don't believe the government should provide health insurance to all people.

If I am a multimillionaire and I get sick, my kids get sick, I have the best health care in the world. But if I am a struggling, middle-class person, working-class person, lower income person, hey, the government should not be involved in those areas.

Minimum wage. Many of us believe, and the overwhelming majority of the American people believe, that the minimum wage today, at about \$7.25 an hour, the Federal minimum wage, is too low. I wish to applaud the Governor and the legislature in California for raising their minimum wage to \$10. But right now we are at about \$7.25 for the Federal Government. Do people know what most of our colleagues here believe? It is not just that they are opposed to raising the minimum wage; they want to abolish the concept of the minimum wage. That is the fact. The American people don't know that.

What does that mean? It means if a person is living in a high unemployment area where a lot of people are struggling for a few jobs and an employer says, The best I can pay is \$3.50 an hour—that is what I can pay—I have to take that. People think I am kidding. I am not kidding. A majority of the Republicans, to the best of my knowledge, now believe in abolishing the concept of the minimum wage.

Environmental protection. We have made some real progress in recent years—not enough, but we have made some progress. When we go to New York City, California, Los Angeles, the air is cleaner. We have cleaned up a lot of rivers. We have told companies they can't put their crap and their toxins into rivers and waterways; they can't put it up in the air so the kids breathe it. We have made some progress on that. Some of our Republican friends say, It is not that we are just opposed to this or that piece of legislation, let's abolish the EPA. Let's abolish the ability of the American people to protect their health.

Let me quote something, and I can quote a lot of sources. I can quote many of the statements made by some of our colleagues, but I want to go to the platform of the 2012 Texas Republican Party. Why do I want to go there? Because, in fact, Texas is a large State. The Republican Party in Texas is very powerful. But, also, the ideas that come from Texas, to be fair to the State of Texas, end up spreading all over this country, especially in Republican circles.

I wish to read some of the proposals in the 2012 Texas Republican Party platform. Texas, one of our largest States, controlled by Republicans right now: "We support an immediate and orderly transition to a system of private pensions based on the concept of

individual retirement accounts and gradually phasing out the Social Security tax."

In English, what that means is they believe in the privatization of Social Security, and people, if they have the money, can invest on Wall Street and do what they want. That is the Texas Republican Party platform.

What else do they say? I want veterans—and I speak as chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee—to listen to this one: "We support the privatization of veterans health care." In other words, they would abolish the Veterans' Administration. We have some 6 million veterans today getting pretty good health care at the VA. Yet at the mainstream of rightwing extremism in this country is the Texas Republican Party that believes we should abolish the VA health care system.

Furthermore, what they are saying is: "We support abolishing all federal agencies whose activities are not specifically enumerated in the Constitution; including the Department of Education and the Department of Energy."

Goodbye, Department of Education, goodbye, Federal aid to education, title I, and many other important programs that are supporting public education in America: Goodbye.

"We . . . oppose . . . mandatory kindergarten." Right now it is widely regarded that the United States has the worst early childhood education system of any major country on Earth. People can't find affordable early childhood education. Their proposal is to abolish mandatory kindergarten.

I spoke about this earlier: "We believe the Environmental Protection Agency should be abolished." No problem. If a company wants to put toxins into the rivers and the lakes and the air, go for it because we have no agency that is going to stop them.

"We recommend repeal of the Sixteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, with the goal of abolishing the I.R.S. and replacing it with a national sales tax collected by the States."

In English, what that means is, what they want to do is move to regressive taxes, ending all forms of progressive taxation. So they want working people, middle-class people, to pay more in taxes, while the wealthy pay less.

"We favor abolishing the capital gains tax [and the estate tax]," which, of course, falls most heavily on wealthy people.

Here is what they say—and I have to give these guys credit, they are up front, they put this on paper—"We believe the Minimum Wage Law should be repealed."

So there we go. People in America will now work for \$3 or \$4 an hour if that is what the circumstances require.

I point out, as I said earlier, this is coming from the Texas Republican Party Platform, and I could have gone elsewhere. But the ideas that come from them end up filtering among rightwing circles all over America.

Now, interestingly enough, at a time when the middle class is disappearing and the wealthy and large corporations are doing phenomenally well, it is important to hear what the CEOs of the largest Wall Street banks and corporations in this country—the Business Roundtable—have to say on the economy. Wall Street—bailed out by the middle class of this country—corporate America enjoying record-breaking profits.

Earlier this year, the Business Roundtable—again, these are the CEOs of the major corporations in America. Without exception, these guys are making millions of dollars a year in income. They have wonderful retirement packages, health care benefits for them and their families. This is what they have to say. They came to Washington, and they called on Congress to raise the eligibility age of Social Security and Medicare to the age of 70–70.

Wall Street billionaires, CEOs making huge amounts of money, with wonderful retirement packages—they now want Congress to raise the retirement age of Social Security and Medicare to age 70; they want to cut Social Security and veterans benefits, their COLAS; they want to raise taxes on working families and, obviously, it goes without saying, cut taxes for the largest corporations in America, at a time when one out of four of these corporations does not pay a nickel in taxes.

That is the background: the middle class collapsing; the rich getting richer. Then we have a right wing in this country, fueled by people like the Koch brothers, and others, who are pushing a totally reactionary agenda.

Let's talk about what that immediate agenda looks like in terms of the CR, the continuing resolution, that, in fact—and this is what is going to pass in the House, as I understand it—would lock in place sequestration for domestic programs, while providing a \$20 billion boost to defense spending for the next 3 months. That is annualized, looking from the year's perspective.

If we do that for a year, that sequestration level, according to the Congressional Budget Office, sequestration will lead to the loss of 900,000 jobs and cause a seven-tenths of 1 percent drop in the GDP. Real unemployment today is close to 14 percent. With sequestration for a year, it would result in the loss of some 900,000 jobs—at exactly a time that we do not need it. Many of the jobs lost will be government jobs, but that should come as no surprise because the extreme right wing really does not believe in the concept of government.

So when we lose jobs in the teaching profession, when we lose police officers and firefighters and construction workers and VA nurses and VA doctors and scientists and engineers, that is no problem for some of these fellows.

Sequestration—we should be clear—has already caused enormous pain for millions of Americans. As I mentioned

earlier, this country is way behind our global competitors in terms of childcare, early childhood education.

As a result of sequestration, more than 57,000 kids are losing access to Head Start and Early Head Start Programs.

At a time when food insecurity is skyrocketing, and when millions and millions of parents are wondering how they are going to be able to feed their kids, what the sequestration does is it literally goes after some of the most vulnerable people in this country, who are elderly people, low income, living on minimal Social Security benefits, who cannot even leave their homes. They are served right now by the Meals on Wheels Program, and I want to thank all of the Meals on Wheels volunteers out there for doing a great job trying to help these seniors. Sequestration will continue major cuts, throwing thousands and thousands of seniors off the Meals on Wheels Program.

We have a serious housing crisis in America. Sequestration will make it harder for over 100,000 families to get a variety of affordable housing programs.

Everybody knows the cost of a college education is soaring. Working-class families cannot afford college today. Yet sequestration would result in 70,000 college students losing Federal work-study grants. That is the means by which they earn some money to help stay in college.

Sequestration will result in cutting back on chemotherapy treatments to thousands of cancer patients because of a 2-percent cut to Medicare providers.

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program—very important in the State of Vermont where it gets cold—massive cuts.

Long-term unemployment checks—unemployment remains high—a 10-percent cut. That will be continued.

So that is where we are right now.

And it gets worse. It gets worse. If the Boehner CR is approved, programs that millions of Americans rely on will be cut even further. So everything I told you will get even worse.

I think what we are looking at right now is not just the immediate pain of the continuing resolution or the threat not to pay our debts and destroy the credit rating of the United States of America. Those are enormous realities. But what we are looking at is a real effort to dismember the U.S. Government and wreak havoc on the lives of tens and tens and tens of millions of people.

To my mind, what we have to do is exactly the opposite of what our right-wing friends are suggesting. They are suggesting that we should raise unemployment. They are suggesting that we should cut back on Federal funding for infrastructure. I believe we should be investing billions and billions of dollars in addressing our crumbling infrastructure—roads, bridges, water systems, wastewater plants, our rail system. When we do that, we make this country more productive and we create

millions of jobs. I believe we have to invest significantly in energy efficiency and sustainable energy. When we do that, we not only protect the environment and combat global warming, but we also create jobs. I believe we have to rewrite our disastrous trade policies so that American jobs are not our No. 1 export. I believe, instead of further deregulation of Wall Street, Wall Street has to be effectively regulated so their greed and recklessness can no longer cause enormous problems for our economy. Instead of lowering taxes for the wealthiest people, I think it is high time they started paying their fair share of taxes.

So what we are involved in here is a great debate, which goes beyond the continuing resolution. It goes beyond the shutdown of the government. It goes beyond whether the United States fails to pay its bills for the first time in history. I believe what we have is an ideology, a rightwing ideology which reflects, at most, the views of 15 percent of the American people. I think that is probably a generous perspective. I think the vast majority of the American people do not believe what rightwing extremism is doing, and it is high time we begin to stand and say to these people: If you are going to continue those efforts, you may not be back here in the U.S. Congress.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to speak for up to 10 minutes in morning business.

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

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. President.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, today, the House of Representatives is voting on legislation dealing with the farm bill and food stamps. Recently—this week—the House of Representatives broke with 40 years of tradition, precedent, common sense, and perhaps human decency when it bowed to partisan politics and passed a farm bill without a nutrition title. They pulled apart what traditionally urban and rural interests have done in this country: coming together to pass a farm bill, connecting it with a nutrition title, where it served rural America, it served urban America, it was good for hungry kids, it was good for economic development, it was good for conservation and the environment.

The House leadership has announced that later today—sometime this afternoon—the House will vote on a bill that would cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, by nearly \$40 billion. They are taking up this bill because the \$20 billion in punitive SNAP cuts they failed to pass earlier this year was not enough for the