

need women on the Federal bench. A vote to end this filibuster is a vote to break yet another barrier and move in the historic direction of having our Federal appellate courts more accurately reflect the gender balance of the country.

I commend President Obama on his nominations of highly qualified women such as Nina Pillard, Patricia Millett, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor. In each of these women, the Senate has had the opportunity to vote to confirm women practicing at the pinnacle of the legal profession. Once the Senate confirmed Justice Kagan, the highest court in the land had more women than ever before serving on its bench. With the confirmation and appointment of Nina Pillard, the same will be true for what many consider to be the second highest court in the land, the DC Circuit, because she will be the fifth active female judge on the court. Never before have five women jurists actively served on that court at one time. I look forward to that moment and to further increasing the diversity of our federal bench.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of ending the filibuster on this outstanding nominee. This Nation would be better off for Nina Pillard serving as a judge on the DC Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to invoke cloture on the Pillard nomination, upon reconsideration.

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Cornelia T. L. Pillard, of the District of Columbia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Richard J. Durbin, John D. Rockefeller IV, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jon Tester, Sheldon Whitehouse, Mark R. Warner, Patty Murray, Mazie Hirono, Angus S. King, Jr., Barbara Boxer, Jeanne Shaheen, Robert Menendez, Bill Nelson, Debbie Stabenow, Richard Blumenthal.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Cornelia T. L. Pillard, of the District of Columbia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit, shall be brought to a close, upon reconsideration?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator

from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 56, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 255 Ex.]

YEAS—56

Baldwin	Hagan	Murray
Baucus	Harkin	Nelson
Begich	Heinrich	Pryor
Bennet	Heitkamp	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Reid
Booker	Johnson (SD)	Rockefeller
Boxer	Kaine	Sanders
Brown	King	Schatz
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cardin	Landrieu	Shaheen
Carper	Leahy	Stabenow
Casey	Levin	Tester
Collins	Markey	Udall (CO)
Coons	McCaskill	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	Menendez	Warner
Durbin	Merkley	Warren
Feinstein	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Franken	Murkowski	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murphy	

NAYS—42

Alexander	Fischer	McConnell
Ayotte	Flake	Moran
Barrasso	Graham	Paul
Blunt	Grassley	Portman
Boozman	Hatch	Risch
Burr	Heller	Roberts
Chambliss	Hoeven	Rubio
Coats	Inhofe	Scott
Coburn	Isakson	Sessions
Cochran	Johanns	Shelby
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Thune
Cornyn	Lee	Toomey
Crapo	Manchin	Vitter
Enzi	McCain	Wicker

NOT VOTING—2

Cruz Kirk

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Cornelia T. L. Pillard, of the District of Columbia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1797

Mr. REED. Mr. President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 1797, which was submitted earlier today; that the bill be read three times and passed; and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I want to reserve the right to object. I am certainly willing to let the good Senator make comments. But at this point I want to reserve the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. HOEVEN. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, first of all, I think it is appropriate to make some comments. I appreciate the Senator from North Dakota being here and making his point. But we are at a jun-

ture that within 2 weeks 1.3 million Americans will lose their Federal unemployment compensation insurance.

It will be a shock to them economically and particularly since it will be just a few days after the Christmas holiday. My legislation is very simple. I am seeking to extend for an additional year the unemployment compensation program that has been in place for several years. That will allow 1.3 million Americans to have some support as they face a very difficult economy.

We have asked, as Democrats, that this UI proposal be part of the budget negotiation. Our colleagues in the House of Representatives have made the same request. It appears that will not be the case. So we have to seek a stand-alone legislative vehicle. That is why I proposed the legislation as I have done today.

What we were trying to do, with the request that was just objected to, and what we have to do within 2 weeks is pass this legislation—so the upcoming expiration does not allow us the time for the procedural process of committee deliberation and markup, et cetera. What we have to do is try to avoid a huge economic shock to 1.3 million Americans immediately. There will be more after that. But as of December 28, if you are on unemployment insurance, Federal unemployment insurance, you lose it.

In my State, that is 4,900 people celebrating New Year's Day by losing their Federal unemployment insurance benefits; for families who are struggling just to keep their heads above water in a very difficult economy—who have seen their jobs disappear, who after years of dedicated work find themselves now looking at very difficult circumstances for employment, in my home State particularly, but not my home State alone—this is a very difficult burden to bear.

So we have to act. That is why we are here this evening, to ask for immediate consideration of my legislation to extend unemployment insurance, not further review, but immediate consideration.

I think it is important to point out that the average weekly benefit is about \$300 per week. This is not a program that people are using to enrich themselves by any means. This is basically keeping the heat on, keeping some food on the table, maybe keeping the rent paid. Also, this is a program that people only qualify for after working and establishing a work history.

So for all of these reasons, we are not talking about some lavish benefit that is a windfall to Americans. This is something that can keep families together. That is why I think we have to be willing, beginning this evening, to get this program extended through next year at least.

There is another aspect to this too. Unemployment insurance is one of the best countercyclical economic programs we have when it comes to Federal fiscal policy. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that

with the expiration of UI, if we do not act, it will cost our economy next year 200,000 jobs. It will cost us jobs if we do not act. It will slow economic growth by about .2 percent is their estimate.

So not only is this sensible, in fact the decent thing to do for millions of families, it is the smart thing to do for our economy. Because if we do not do it, we are literally seeing, under very rational estimates, 200,000 jobs disappear. What is the one thing everybody claims we need to do in this country right now? Put more people back to work.

This extension has been scored at about \$26 billion for the year. Traditionally, we have treated unemployment insurance as an emergency expenditure. We have not offset it. That tradition has been abandoned recently and we have had to come up with offsets. But there are offsets. There are tax loopholes that should be closed. There are provisions that encourage companies to move jobs overseas that we can close and pay for this.

There are other provisions that would stop subsidizing significant multimillion dollar corporate benefits so American families can have a chance. These loopholes we have talked about—and many of my colleagues talked about—they should be closed anyway. But if it helps pay for unemployment insurance, that is not only good, that is something that would be a very positive step forward.

We need to extend these benefits not only for the individual families but for the overall economy. We have to start immediately. We are running out of time. We have just 2 weeks. Nothing is more important than getting people back to work. As I said, if we do not do this, we are going to see 200,000 jobs that are going to be forgone in the next year. So this is about jobs, as well as it is about keeping families together and keeping them able to provide for their basic needs.

It is progrowth. It is smart. I hope we can come together and do it. I hope again—I appreciate certainly the objection of the Senator from North Dakota. But I hope we can find a way to not object but to move forward together. The benefits cut across party lines. If you look at the States that are suffering the most—as we all know, the unemployment compensation program is a tiered program. It depends upon the level of unemployment in our States. But if you look at the States that are suffering the most, and unfortunately I am going to have to say Rhode Island is one of them. Nevada has the highest unemployment rate, 9.3. We are right behind them, 9.2 percent.

It has been 5 long years of unacceptable and elevated unemployment. It has come down from above 10 percent, but it is still much too high. But this is not a regional phenomenon. Illinois, 8.9 percent unemployment; Mississippi, 8.5 percent unemployment; Kentucky, 8.4 percent unemployment; North Carolina, 8 percent unemployment; Georgia,

8.1 percent unemployment; Arizona, 8.2 percent unemployment. These are tough numbers. It is not concentrated in one place; it is across this entire country. This is not a red issue or a blue issue. This is an American issue for workers who have worked and now cannot find jobs and need support. There is something else that is important to mention; that is, we have seen some progress on the jobs front. The last report showed we actually grew last month, 203,000 jobs. That is the good news. The bad news is despite this improvement, long-term unemployment remains high.

More than 4 million workers, 37 percent of those unemployed, were jobless for 27 weeks or longer in November. So what we are seeing is some short-term movement, but the longer term unemployment, the ones who qualify for the Federal benefits, they are still finding it virtually—very difficult, if not impossible, to find work.

That is exactly what this Federal program is designed to fix. Those long-term unemployed who are in an environment, in a State where the economy is not working as well as some other States. There are some States that are doing exceptionally well. I am glad for them. But there are more, as I said before, who are experiencing unacceptably high unemployment rates.

This program started to take shape in its most recent incarnation in June 2008, when President George W. Bush signed the program into law. When he did it, the unemployment rate was 5.6 percent and the average duration of unemployment was 17.1 weeks. So we are looking now at a situation that nationally and in many States is much higher than when we initiated this program back in 2008.

Now is not the time to stop, and in order to get this done, we have to move expeditiously. There is not time for elaborate hearings. There is not time for conferences with the House. The House is proposing to leave this Friday. We have to move immediately.

Today, our national unemployment rate is 7 percent. The duration of unemployment is 37.2 weeks. That is 7 percent compared to 5.6 and 37.2 weeks compared to 17.1 weeks. We still need this program to help the families of this Nation. We can't end it now. We have to move forward, particularly during this holiday season.

The reality—and finally to make this point—is that people will be looking at a new year coming with the knowledge that what little benefit they are getting as they search for work—an average of \$300 a week—is gone. That is a tough reality, to look at your family on New Year's Day and understand that you don't have those resources.

So we have to act, and I hope we can. With that, I yield the floor for my colleague and his comments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I objected earlier, and I want to express my

appreciation to the good Senator from Rhode Island. I understand his concerns, but I want to take a minute just to explain the objection that we have.

I don't think there is anyone in this Chamber who is indifferent to the plight of the long-term unemployed. However, this legislation falls under the jurisdiction of the Senate Finance Committee and, as of yet, the committee has not had the opportunity to consider it.

There are a number of concerns that Members on our side of the aisle have with the legislation, most notably the price tag. According to the CBO, a full 1-year extension of the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Program would cost \$25 billion for a single year. That is the cost of this bill, and the bill contains no offsets to cover that cost.

So the Senate Finance Committee needs to have an opportunity to consider this legislation to find a way to pay for it. In addition, the committee needs to have an opportunity to consider alternatives. Rather than simply providing additional benefits to the unemployed, hopefully we can come up with something that really helps them get back to work. Republicans are willing to consider such ideas and need to have an opportunity to do so through the committee process.

It is on that basis that I object to my colleague's unanimous consent request.

I thank the Chair for the time and the courtesy of my colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I certainly respect my colleague from North Dakota for stating his principled position. I think we can both agree on one thing: We have to start moving very quickly because this reality is moving very rapidly on 1.3 million Americans. I hope we can move forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I too hope we can resolve the issue my colleagues were just discussing. It is an important one for the country. We are very blessed in Louisiana to have a relatively low unemployment rate because our economy is doing so well, in large measure because of extraordinary new technologies, which I think the Chair understands as well in Indiana, where they used to discover oil and gas, and particularly natural gas in places and in ways we never thought possible. That is creating a real resurgence of manufacturing in our State, and that is benefiting not only us and our neighbors along the gulf coast, but it is benefiting States all over America.

The economic numbers, despite the great challenges we have here in the Congress on our budget, on paying down our debt, on reducing our annual deficit, on procedural measures and how to run the Senate and work more effectively on behalf of the people of all of our States, are really quite good in

North Dakota, in South Dakota, in Texas, Louisiana, and other States. They are experiencing really very low numbers of unemployment because the jobs are plentiful. Our challenge is, just to comment briefly, on training the workforce we are going to need to fill all the jobs we have. These are very good-paying jobs, some starting at \$40,000 or \$60,000 a year—construction, welders—going up to \$125,000. Some are temporary, but many of them will be permanent.

So I hope we can resolve this unemployment issue, because, unfortunately, in Senator REED's State—the State of Rhode Island—and in 20 other States there is very high unemployment. In some States it might still be over 9 percent. They are chronically unemployed because of the competition of globalization and other factors. So I think we have to try to find a way to work together as a Nation. As I said, Louisiana is blessed to have relatively low unemployment, but we have a big job skills training gap we are working on in our State.

VETERANS AFFAIRS MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY LEASE AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2013

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I want to actually talk a few minutes this evening about a very important bill the House just passed by an extraordinary vote of 346 to 1. My colleague, Congressman BOUSTANY in the House, was the lead sponsor, and I want to really congratulate him for his extraordinary work on this particular bill. It is something he and I have worked together on across party lines. He is a Republican and I am a Democrat, but we worked very closely together to get this entire bill passed not only for the benefit of Louisiana—which is shaded here on this chart as one of the States that would benefit—but we can see here how many other States between 2013 and 2017 will be affected positively by the passage of this bill.

The bill is the Veterans Affairs Major Medical Facility Lease Authorization Act. That is a mouthful, but it takes important action. It basically uses the guidance of the Office of Management and Budget—we received a letter from them at my request—and formulates a piece of legislation that will allow the Veterans Administration to build clinics the way they have been building clinics for our veterans—who really need the highest and best quality care—using a lease arrangement.

The reason we had to pass this bill—and I will be working with Senator VITTER and many others to ask unanimous consent at the proper time for this bill to pass through the Senate—is because about 6 years ago there was an administrative ruling that basically stopped the ability of the Veterans Affairs Department to be able to build these very needed veterans clinics by using a lease.

Internally, the administration just decided to score it differently. That threw lots of sand into the gears, and those gears have been stuck for 6 years. In our State, veterans in Lafayette and in Lake Charles have been waiting and waiting and waiting. We had some added complications, which the Veterans Administration has taken the blame for, in that the bid process that was used initially for one of our clinics was defective and they had to throw it out.

But the end of this sad story is that a great bill passed the House of Representatives, literally just a few hours ago, and I wanted to come to the floor to say how proud I am of Congressman BOUSTANY and his dogged pursuit of justice. The district of Congressman BOUSTANY is in the part of the State where these two clinics will be built, in Lafayette and Lake Charles, so I worked closely with him, as has Senator VITTER, to make sure we brought some clarity and focus to this issue in order to move forward. As the bill moved through to help us with our problem, it turns out it is also going to help many other States that are scheduled for veterans clinics.

I also want to thank Congressman MILLER of Florida, who is the chair of the VA committee. He worked very closely with Congressman BOUSTANY. Also I want to thank BERNIE SANDERS, our Senator from Vermont who chairs our committee here. Senator SANDERS—whose desk is right here, next to mine—has been very supportive of this effort. While I am not going to ask unanimous consent at this moment, he and I have had a discussion earlier today about how strongly he supports this effort and how much he wants to help us get this done.

There are 27 clinics in 22 States. This process—or nightmare, I should say—began in Louisiana about 6 years ago. Four years ago the ruling was made, but our legislation that was passed in the House will override that and basically set us on a course that is both fiscally responsible and so important to our veterans. We must honor the promises we made to them that we would provide clinics close enough so they could access them and so they are not driving hundreds of miles for regular care. We can be very smart in the way we design these leases so it will be a benefit to the taxpayer, a benefit to the veterans and it will really meet our obligation to them.

So again, the bill just passed the House, and tomorrow I will be asking unanimous consent, along with Senator VITTER, to move this bill, to get it to the President's desk and get it signed so that veterans who have been waiting—particularly in our State—for so long will have something extra special to celebrate this Christmas holiday.

I yield the floor, and 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. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

COMMENDING SENATOR MURRAY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, a couple years ago I surprised everyone—but I didn't surprise myself—when I selected PATTY MURRAY as chair of the supercommittee. At the time Patty was chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, she was a member of the Budget Committee, and I thought she would do a remarkably good job because I had such faith in her integrity, her temperament, her wisdom, and her ability to get things done.

The country should be so pleased with the work she was able to do on a bipartisan basis with PAUL RYAN. It is really a kind of unconventional pair working together to come up with a budget that we can work on for 2 years. We have numbers now. I am very pleased that budget negotiators MURRAY and RYAN have come up with an agreement today that will roll back the painful arbitrary cuts of sequester and prevent another costly government shutdown. I again commend Budget Committee chairman PATTY MURRAY for making this possible. But it is also fair—and I hope this doesn't get him in trouble in the House—to say that Chairman RYAN also worked hard. It was a compromise. We didn't get what we wanted, they didn't get what they wanted, but that is what legislation is all about—working together. “Compromise” is not a bad word.

We believed all along that Congress should set sound fiscal policy through the regular order of the budget process and not through hostage-taking or crisis-making. We will have a lot more to say about this in the days to come, but this is a good day for our country.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed now to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of International Human Rights Day. Sixty-five years ago, on December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which serves as a foundation for human rights initiatives internationally, and is an enduring guide for human rights advocates around the globe.

On this annual celebration of International Human Rights Day we all