

Thune	Vitter	Whitehouse
Toomey	Warner	Wicker

NAYS—31

Baldwin	Hagan	Schumer
Begich	Harkin	Shaheen
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Stabenow
Booker	Markey	Tester
Boxer	Menendez	Udall (CO)
Cantwell	Merkley	Udall (NM)
Cardin	Mikulski	Walsh
Donnelly	Murray	Warren
Feinstein	Rockefeller	Wyden
Franken	Sanders	
Gillibrand	Schatz	

The nomination was confirmed.

NOMINATION OF JOSEPH WILLIAM WESTPHAL TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the clerk will report the Westphal nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Joseph William Westphal, of New York, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there is now 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on the Westphal nomination.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for perhaps more than 2 minutes or such time as I may consume.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask my colleagues to recognize they have an opportunity now to support someone who is most deserving for the position of Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. His name is Dr. Joseph William Westphal. While he is not an Oklahoma man, in his heart I think he is. He spent most of his time or much of his time in Oklahoma. He is a good personal friend of mine. He actually attended and graduated from the University of Oklahoma. Then he came back and was head of the political science department at Oklahoma State University—kind of an unusual combination.

Joe Westphal is one who has had a career in academia—and I don't really care that much about that, except for his two exposures in Oklahoma—but he also was the chancellor at the University of Maine, he taught public policy as the adjunct professor at Georgetown University, and he has been a Capitol Hill professional staff member for a long time. He actually was on the House Budget Committee for a long period of time. He was also a special assistant to our Senator THAD COCHRAN, although this has been some time ago.

In the executive branch, Joe served as the Army assistant secretary, then the Acting Secretary of the Army—that was 2001—and then as the 30th Under Secretary of the Army for the past 5 years.

As I say, he is a good friend of mine. What is different about him is, there are a lot of people who have a career, have a background in academia, but then there are the ones who have shown they also have a heart—they have a reason for what they are doing and they have a love for using the position they hold to help other people, and that is what Joe Westphal has done for a long period of time.

When Joe was Under Secretary—I think he was actually Acting Secretary of the Army—we were together in southern Oklahoma at Fort Sill. Fort Sill is outside of Lawton, OK, in the southwestern part of the State, and we had two schools down there, one called Geronimo and the other was Sheridan. Not Sheraton, like the hotel chain, but the Sheridan Indians, and we all know who Geronimo is. These were old schools. They are public schools, but the roofs leaked, and they had been around for a long period of time. The majority of the kids who went to school there are the sons and daughters of our military people. And because of his heart, for them, we went down together and we looked at this and saw something could be done to help these kids. So we put together—and he did through the Army—using it, perfectly legitimately, for the percentage of the population in the school who were actually the sons and daughters of military people, and we built a school that is now a model for schools and establishments that are in conjunction with large cities. It is something that now a lot of kids are very happy as they graduate from the Freedom Elementary School at Fort Sill, OK. Oklahoma has at this school 1,000 servicemember children. So we replaced the old one for them.

I also remember when we had a request—and I am sure the Chair knows, because he has made requests of the bureaucracy before, and sometimes it takes longer than it would be otherwise, longer than it should take—because we had a need in my State of Oklahoma for a museum to have an old Huey helicopter that had been used in the military many years ago. We tried everything we could to get that done, and one phone call from this guy named Dr. Joseph William Westphal, and it was done.

I probably shouldn't say this to my Democratic friends over here, but I have been such a good friend of his, I was afraid to express myself for fear President Obama might change his mind. But nonetheless he is now up for confirmation—I understand we are going to do that by voice vote—and I can't imagine anyone wouldn't take advantage of the opportunity to vote for Dr. Joseph Westphal to be U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). Is there further debate?

If not, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomina-

tion of Joseph W. Westphal to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIRE-FIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

REMEMBERING KATE PUZEY

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the fifth anniversary of the tragic murder of a Georgia citizen who volunteered for the Peace Corps, who traveled to West Africa to the nation of Benin and lost her life. She lost her life because she did the right thing—she reported the abuse of children in a village school where she taught.

The reason I have recently returned from Benin is that I have taken this case on as a personal passion, to see to it that justice and some closure comes to the family of this wonderful young lady. Her name was Kate Puzey. Kate Puzey was top of her class, valedictorian, outstanding student, and she wanted to go out and save the world, to help the world and fulfill the dream John Kennedy professed in 1961 when he created the Peace Corps.

So Kate Puzey went to Benin and she found that one of the village natives in the village where she was teaching was abusing children in the school where she was teaching. In this very remote area, she took the only communication mechanism she had to report the violation of these children to the appropriate authorities in Cotonou, Benin. Unfortunately, because those communications were not secure, a relative of the person she reported notified the person she had reported that he had been reported. That night, in her hut in the Nation of Benin, her throat was cut and she died. She died because she did the right thing.

This Senate, 2 years ago, joined me and Senator BOXER in passing the Peace Corps Protection Act, which is now named the Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act. This provides a mechanism and a way where Peace Corps volunteers can report violations or trauma of a sexual nature, gender-based violence, or any other type of violence against themselves or in any other place where they might be as a servant of the Peace Corps. Because of that, there are now ombudsmen and ways and mechanisms where

our Peace Corps volunteers can safely report violations and damage and have the protection not only of the United States but of the nation where they serve.

But back to the point of my trip to Benin, which took place this last week. This was my second visit to Benin, because what I want to see is a continuation of the investigation of the death of this young lady until there is a trial and closure available for her and her family, just as any of us would want were we the parent of a young lady who had lost her life on behalf of the United States of America.

I rise to pay particular tribute first to Secretary Kerry; to the United Nations' Samantha Power; to the State Department of the United States of America; to Michael Raynor, the Ambassador in Benin; to Todd Whatley, the Deputy Chief of Mission; to Kevin Armstrong, the USAID Director; to Billy Alfano, to Marilyn Gayton, and to Robert Freedom—Bob Friedman—the Peace Corps representative in Benin, all of whom have made the investigation and the fulfillment of bringing this case to a reality their top priority.

Three years ago, when I went to Benin for the first time, it was to encourage President Yayi of Benin to allow the United States to come in and assist in the investigation and the prosecution of the case—a rare thing to happen in a French colony which is governed by French law. To our credit and to President Yayi's credit he allowed the United States and Jennifer Dent, the FBI agent in charge in Lagos, to come in to Benin and begin assisting the investigation.

I went back last week during our break because it looked as though the case was dying. It looked as though the intensity of the interest was dying. And it was so important to me and for the family in my home State of Georgia to see to it we in some way finally bring closure, either right or wrong, for the terrible things that happened. I am happy to report the visit was successful.

President Yayi spent over 4 hours with the family members and myself. He committed the judiciary and the investigatory body in the Nation of Benin to accept the assistance of the U.S. FBI and our technology. During the course of our visit, he removed and separated the prisoners, as had been requested by the FBI, to see to it those who are being held and thought to be guilty in this case could no longer communicate in the prisons where they were held.

I don't know what the ultimate result will be, and I want justice to be done. I want the right person to be persecuted and prosecuted, and the right person to pay the price, but I want closure for this family.

I want to thank the American Embassy, the State Department, and Samantha Power at the U.N. for the intensity they have put into this inves-

tigation, as well as the U.S. FBI, and in particular Victor Lloyd, special agent in Lagos, Nigeria, for all the time he has dedicated. We seem to be at a point where everything is coming together toward a prosecution and, ultimately, a trial. When that happens, it will happen primarily because the U.S. Government, the people of the United States of America, both President Bush and President Obama, and all in this Congress have dedicated themselves to the interest of one child's life—Kate Puzey.

It is important the people of this country know that we as a body will come together behind any injured American, any loss of life, anybody who has deployed themselves on behalf of this country in the service of peace and prosperity. They deserve to know the U.S. Congress and this U.S. Senate are standing ready to help.

But I am here in particular to pay tribute to the Embassy of Benin, to FBI Special Agent Victor Lloyd, and to all those who have helped and assisted in seeing to it the prosecution of the case in the murder of Kate Puzey comes to a final conclusion. I am grateful for their service to America, grateful for what they have done for the Puzey family in Georgia, and grateful that I live in a country that protects and loves those who have represented our interests wherever it may be, on whatever shore it may be, and in whatever country it may be.

May God bless America, may God bless the Peace Corps, and may God bless the family of Kate Puzey.

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

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

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

FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as I speak, all over the country telephones are ringing. When the recipient of the call picks up, they are greeted by the friendly voice of a college recruiter from a for-profit college or university. It is easy to go back to school, this recruiter will tell those who answer the phone. In fact, we can sign you up for Federal loans right now.

That is the key. These for-profit colleges and universities target individuals who qualify for easy Federal money. Pell grants and GI bill benefits are preferred. And all the promises sound so good to those who are receiving these phone calls. After all, going back to school is supposed to be the path to success and more money in your life. But before they know what has hit them, these people who answered the phone call from for-profit schools and universities find out they are taking on more debt than they can even understand and may end up with a so-called education that is worthless.

That is what happened to Jaqueta Cherry from North Carolina. After trying a community college, Jaqueta was lured by the kind voice on the other

end of the phone and the fancy commercials on TV. She saw them in North Carolina. You see them across the United States. Get on a bus in Chicago and look around at all the signs trying to lure young people on those buses into for-profit colleges and universities.

Jaqueta said: The schools blew up my phone.

She enrolled at Everest College, which is part of the Corinthian College chain. The California attorney general is currently suing this chain of schools, and the Department of Education is investigating allegations that they lied to the Federal Government about their job placements.

In the meantime, Jaqueta's living situation changed, and she had to drop out and couldn't continue her studies at Everest. It wasn't long before she was tracked down by another for-profit school through a pop-up ad she clicked on, on the Internet. If someone is college age and gets on the Internet, they will see these ads bombarding them from for-profit colleges and universities. She got a call the next day from the Education Management Corporation's The Art Institutes and signed up for an online program.

After taking out more loans, Jaqueta found herself unable to continue her courses. Her roommate had moved out, left her with unpaid bills, and her only access to the Internet was a phone that was turned off 2 days prior to her final exams. At that point she was thousands of dollars in debt with nothing to show for it. Guess what. The calls kept coming. DeVry—the second or third largest for-profit school in the United States, based in Chicago, currently being investigated by the Federal Trade Commission for their advertising and marketing policies—called her, and then ITT Tech called her as well. They are being sued by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau for pressuring students into high-cost private loans.

The calls she gets from Everest and The Art Institutes these days are not the kind voices they used to be. "They're very mean and threatening," she says. Not surprising. You see, Jaqueta is no longer an ATM machine from which they can draw Federal dollars.

For many years for-profit schools were allowed to operate relatively freely and often one step ahead of the regulators. I am hopeful that with the investigations I mentioned and the many others that are occurring State by State, we may be turning a corner. We need to hold these schools—all schools but especially for-profit schools—accountable to taxpayers, who often subsidize up to 90 percent of their operations, and to students, who ultimately are their victims.

If we take all the Federal money that goes to for-profit colleges and universities and total it up, it is around \$20 billion. This private sector group would be the equivalent of the ninth largest Federal agency in Washington. They

survive on Federal money. The only thing different is, of course, their employees aren't Federal employees and their CEOs make more money than any employee of the Federal Government could ever dream of.

There are a lot of agencies involved in looking at these for-profit colleges and universities—Department of Education, Securities and Exchange Commission, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Federal Trade Commission, Department of Defense, and others. It is important that they work together.

This morning I held a hearing in my Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. In front of me was the Secretary of the Navy, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Chief of Naval Operations, and we talked about these schools. I can tell you in private what they told me. They are saddened at how many military families are lured into these schools and waste their GI benefits, going online to places called the American Military University—boy, doesn't that sound official. That sounds like the real thing. It is another for-profit school that just happened to pick a name which appeals to a lot of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.

A nephew of mine was a doorman right up here. Then he served in the Army and was sent overseas to Afghanistan. I was so proud of him. He got home safely. Then he was sent to Korea. He came home safely. Now he is out of the Army. He contacted me once and said: I have good news for you. I avoided all those for-profit schools you warned me about, and I signed up with the American Military University.

He didn't know any better. He thought for sure that this was real. It is really not. I advised him that there is one university from his home State, the University of Maryland, which has been offering courses to the military for decades—and their hours are transferable when he comes home.

Oh, he said. I should have thought of that.

What the Navy told us this morning is they are now sitting down with the sailors and their families and saying: Think twice before you sign up for these for-profit schools. You are wasting your GI benefits on schools that could be worthless. Think twice about whether those hours are transferable when you get out of the service.

Sadly, there are too many American citizens—young people primarily and even members of the military—who were lured into these awful schools before anybody warned them.

Senator TOM HARKIN of Iowa and I are working on a bill we will introduce next week to ensure that the agencies currently investigating all of these for-profit schools are coordinating their efforts. He and I teamed up on this issue a long time ago. It is going to be a shame when Senator HARKIN retires from the Senate this year, but the for-profit schools should know that the spotlight TOM HARKIN turned on with

his committee hearings is going to continue even after he leaves.

An industry that receives more than \$25 billion in Federal dollars and has such a terrible record needs aggressive oversight. We don't owe it to just the taxpayers who are coming up with \$25 billion for these schools; we owe it to the students who are lured into these schools, lured into debt, and end up many times with nothing to show for it.

We need to keep three numbers in mind when we think about the for-profit colleges and universities, and I always warn people that these three numbers will be on the final, so listen closely.

Ten percent of the students who graduate from high school go to for-profit colleges and universities; yet they receive 20 percent of all the Federal aid to education because they cost twice as much. For-profit colleges and universities account for 46 percent of all student loan defaults. So 10 percent of the students, 46 percent of the defaults. Why? They charge too much, they lure these students deep into debt, and the students can't finish school or end up with worthless diplomas when they graduate.

The sad reality is that the Federal Government is complicit. We are complicit because we don't blow the whistle on these schools, which should never, ever—never—qualify for Pell grants and Federal student loans.

There is a kicker. Unlike virtually every other debt you can incur in life, student loans are not dischargeable in bankruptcy. I have had students \$150,000 in debt after 4 years in school and their lives are virtually ruined. They had no idea what they were getting into. When they were private loans, those loans grew geometrically whenever they failed to pay. Where are those students today? They are living in their parents' basement. They cannot afford to get married, they cannot buy a car, and if they get married, they cannot afford to have children. They certainly cannot afford to borrow money to go to a real college or university. They are stuck, and we ought to do something about it.

Student loans in this country are exploding. They are trapping generations of students such as Jaqueta in poverty, and they are hurting their opportunities for being full members in our society and economy. We have to address head-on these for-profit colleges which are a scourge on education. There are a few exceptions, but by and large this industry with 46 percent of the student loan defaults is shameful.

Chairman HARKIN is going to hold a hearing in the Senate HELP Committee this week on the student loan programs. I am going to work with him and submit some testimony. Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island and Senator ELIZABETH WARREN of Massachusetts and I are putting together a package of bills. We are going to address this issue from a lot of different perspectives.

There is no reason a college student should sign up for a private loan with higher interest rates and worse conditions for payback when they are still eligible for government loans which are more flexible and have lower interest rates. Yet some of these irresponsible schools steer their kids into private loans. The kids don't know any better, neither do their parents. Secondly, they end up loaning money to these students and to their families that they will never, ever be able to pay back. Senator REED says they ought to have some skin in the game. At some point if they have been overextended in loans, they ought to have to eat some of those losses when the students cannot pay it back.

Senator WARREN is tackling an even bigger issue about refinancing college loans. What is it all about? It is about giving a fair shot to these families and these students. We are going to talk a lot about this.

When I think of where I am today, it is because of my mother who checked my report card every 6 weeks and told me I could always do better and because of that I ended up in college and law school and here I stand. I borrowed money from the government to do it and couldn't have done it otherwise. So I believe in education, and I certainly believe kids from lower and middle-income families, when they need to borrow money, should have that opportunity. What is happening today is out of hand. The debt we are piling on students and their families is unconscionable, not just the for-profit schools but across the board.

On this side of the aisle we believe these students deserve an opportunity, and they shouldn't be saddled with a debt that can literally ruin their lives. We are going to be working on this issue as part of our effort this year to define what Congress can do to make this a better nation for working families across the board to make sure everyone—everyone—has a fair shot.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. STABENOW. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

We are 5 days away from the deadline to begin enrolling for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act—5 days for folks who don't have insurance now or want to see if they can find a better deal under their local marketplace or Federal marketplace under the Affordable Care Act.

We have heard the stories about the trouble with the Web site last October, but there are so many stories we haven't heard of people successfully signing up now for health care coverage. Those are the stories we want to talk about, in terms of the millions of people who are finding, in fact, for the first time they can have peace of mind, knowing they can find affordable health insurance and not only from a cost standpoint.

Every woman who is able to get insurance now knows she is not going to be rated differently and have higher costs from the insurance company just because she is a woman—being a woman previously was somehow a pre-existing condition—or if she is wanting to have a baby, she knows she can have her maternity care covered, which was not true for millions of women. In fact, going to the private marketplace prior to health care reform, about 60 percent of the insurance policies didn't cover something as important and basic as maternity care, unbelievably. So we are talking about people who are getting covered and people who have peace of mind, knowing they have affordable coverage and they can't get dropped if they get sick.

In fact, now going forward, if anyone has a policy, they cannot get dropped just because they get sick. Anyone who has cancer or diabetes—children with juvenile diabetes or heart disease—all of the various concerns and chronic diseases people have, knows they can find insurance; that they will not be blocked from getting medical care and health insurance because of a pre-existing condition.

So far over 5 million people have already enrolled in private health insurance plans through the new marketplaces, including over 144,000 in my home State of Michigan, people who are finally in a position where they have peace of mind at night, knowing they have health insurance for themselves and their families if somebody gets sick. If they need preventive care, they are not going to have out-of-pocket costs to get the cancer screening, the mammogram, and other preventive care.

In Michigan 144,000 individuals have signed up for health care, which is nearly 16,000 more people than was actually predicted at this point in time, because people want and need affordable health care. This is not a frill. We cannot control whether somebody in the family gets sick. Now there are things we can do to do our best to stay healthy, but we never know when something is going to happen, no matter our age or our circumstance. We all understand. We all want to make sure our children are covered, whether they are 3 years old or 30 years old. We want to make sure our moms and dads are covered, and we want to make sure we have coverage as a small business owner, that there is access to affordable coverage. People are signing up because this is personal for them and for their families.

I wish to share success stories of three of my constituents today. The first story is about LaNika, a 34-year-old volleyball coach from Flint, MI, who lived without health insurance for years while she focused on developing her career path. She didn't think she needed health insurance because she was healthy. One day she had an accident. She was playing volleyball, and she and another woman collided, leav-

ing her with a concussion. We all know head injuries are serious. So she had no choice but to go to the emergency room without having health insurance.

By the way, we all know that people who go to the emergency room without health insurance get treated, as they should, and then everybody with insurance—this is the way we have done it for decades—everybody with insurance sees their rates go up to pay for folks going into the emergency room, getting care in the most expensive way possible, which is going to the emergency room for care, rather than seeing a doctor.

In this particular case LaNika said this was her aha moment. After going to the ER, LaNika logged on to healthcare.gov to see if she could get covered. She entered her information, she compared plans, and she selected the best plan for her. She ended up selecting a silver plan from Michigan's largest health insurance company for less than \$100 a month because of her income level.

The whole process, she said, took an hour. She said that getting her insurance card was like a breath of fresh air because she knew that if disaster struck again she would be covered. Peace of mind, as they say in the commercials, is priceless. Now she can go see a doctor without worrying about a bill she cannot afford to pay.

Another constituent, Jim, from Shelby, MI, shared his story too. He had seen all the bad press, he said, on the Affordable Care Act on TV and social media and thought it wasn't worth it to sign up. He planned to sign his family up for COBRA coverage because he had worked and was going to sign up for COBRA to keep his former employer's coverage going but found out that wasn't an option. He decided to give healthcare.gov a try. After filling out his basic information, he saw how low his costs for good coverage would be and he signed up his family. Because he had such a positive experience, he began sharing it on Facebook so other people could see how easy it was to get covered. A recent post of his read: "There are only a few days left to sign up. Don't let this opportunity pass without taking a look," which is our message today. Don't let this opportunity pass without taking a look.

Another constituent, Bryan, from Okemos called my East Lansing office because he was upset that his health plan had been canceled. The replacement plan he was offered by his insurer wasn't affordable. He let us know how upset he was. He then asked what he was supposed to do.

We suggested he go to healthcare.gov to see if he could find a more affordable option that would meet his needs. He said he didn't have a computer. So we gave him the 1-800 number to call. He was skeptical, of course, that he would find a good plan. He expected to have to wait on the phone for hours to talk to somebody, but we encouraged him to give it a try.

He called the office back shortly with some good news. He had called the 1-800 number and someone answered right away. They were very friendly and helpful, he said. They helped Bryan find a plan that had better coverage than his old plan. On top of that, it was \$60 per month cheaper than his old plan, and he was able to add dental coverage too. He apologized for his first call.

We certainly understand that when people get those kinds of notices that the insurance they have has been canceled, of course everyone responds with panic and being upset with what is going on, what is going to happen to me. But the good news is that he was able to call the 1-800 number and, in fact, find better coverage that was lower priced and he is now also covered for important dental care. He said he is extremely happy with the Affordable Care Act.

LaNika's, Jim's, and Ryan's stories aren't unique. They are very typical. Despite all of the hype and all of the efforts that have gone on, they are very typical. It is important that people get beyond all the politics of health care, which for the life of me I don't know why we are not all working together to make sure people have the health care they need and the information they need—for all the politics that have come before, for people to get beyond that and just find out for themselves if it will work. Hopefully, it will and they will have the same kind of results that LaNika and Jim and Ryan had.

To everyone in America who doesn't have health insurance right now and needs to sign up but hasn't yet, there is less than 1 week to begin the process. Once you have begun, I want to make sure you complete it.

I appreciate the President's willingness to allow more people time to complete that process because health care is an essential in life that literally can be about life or death for a person or their family. I would suggest that folks not get left behind but get covered as LaNika, Jim, and Bryan did. It is quick, it will give you peace of mind, and we are hopeful you will find it to be something that is very good for you and your family.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. BOXER. I thank Senator STABENOW not only for her statement, but she has talked a lot about people she meets in her State and they say to her: Senator, all we want is a fair shot. Before Senator STABENOW leaves the floor I wanted to say I hear the same thing at home as well. When it comes to insurance all people want is a fair shot at affordable insurance. That is why we are here today. We are here to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the Affordable Care Act.

I say for the record, we have millions of reasons in California to say thank you for the Affordable Care Act, and I will go through some of the numbers. We have exceeded our goals. We have

now signed up 1 million, and that is 300,000 over our goal. We now know President Obama has extended the signup period for those who are signing up on the national exchange. We are not sure yet whether California is going to extend its time. Anyone within the sound of my voice—those in California—need to know that we have not yet extended the time, so join the millions of Californians who have signed up through the exchanges.

Let's be clear: This is a real partisan battle. The House Republicans have been bragging about the 54 times they voted to repeal the Affordable Care Act, but I have to tell them before they vote again to tear this law down and vilify this law for the 55th time: Pay attention to the people in my State and all over the country.

I will go through the math of what is happening here. In addition to the 1 million people in California who have signed up on the exchange, we have 400,000 young adults who are staying on their parents' insurance policies and 1.8 million people on Medicaid. When I say we have more than a million reasons to say thank you for this law, we really do.

I have some other numbers to add to this. Eight million Californians now have access to free preventive care, including mammograms, birth control, and immunizations; 16 million Californians with preexisting conditions, such as asthma, cancer, and diabetes are guaranteed coverage—including 2.2 million children. California seniors and people with disabilities are saving money on prescription drugs—350,000, thanks to the work we did to close that doughnut hole, and 12 million Californians have new insurance protections and no longer have to worry about hitting annual limits on their health care.

I say to the Republicans: Wake up and see what is happening in your communities. Don't take my word for it. Listen to some of my Californians:

Just got my Obamacare Covered CA insurance plan. I'm ecstatic. Saving \$400 a month.

Another Californian said: "Loving my new health coverage, way to go California."

Another person wrote:

Just paid my first premium for Covered CA healthcare. A 42% reduction for a nearly identical plan.

Bobby Dutta from Sacramento writes:

I was being crushed by the heavy burden of health insurance premium costs. I had a PPO plan with Anthem Blue Cross and was paying \$1,324 per month for a family of two. Now, for a comparable plan through ACA, my premiums are \$61 per month.

Earth to Republicans: People are saving so much money because of the Affordable Care Act. They are getting peace of mind. Why would Republicans want to repeal a law that is helping so many people in California and across the country? I have never seen a law so vilified.

Today I went back to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—and I want to share

this with Senator MURPHY, who has organized this today. I thought this was the only law Republicans vilified, but I went back to take a look at when Social Security was debated and passed.

In 1935, on the floor of the House during the debate on Social Security, a Republican Congressman from Ohio said:

This is compulsion of the rankest kind.

That was how he talked about Social Security. He called it rank.

Do not be misled by the title. The title says "Old Age Benefits." Shame on you for putting such a misleading and unfair title on such a nefarious bill. Old-age benefits? Think of it! What a travesty! . . .

Another Republican Congressman from Pennsylvania said:

. . . security for the individual, whether worker or aged, will be a mockery and a sham if . . . [we] allot to our people the role of puppets of a socialistic state . . .

Doesn't this sound familiar? If you do anything for people, Republicans will call you a socialist. They call Social Security socialist.

He says:

We cannot provide a sense of security by programs for the destruction of wealth . . .

That is how he described Social Security. Listen, people pay into Social Security. It is an insurance plan. People pay premiums for their health care.

I have to say it: The Republicans are vilifying the Affordable Care Act just as they vilified Social Security and they vilified Medicare.

Let's look at what Republicans said about Medicare. In 1965 a Representative from Missouri said:

. . . we cannot stand idly by now, as the Nation is urged to embark on an ill-conceived adventure in government medicine, the end of which no one can see, and from which the patient is certain to be the ultimate sufferer.

I say to my colleagues: This is unbelievable. In 1965, the Republicans said that government medicine, which they called Medicare, even though you have a private doctor, would lead to patients suffering. If you ask patients who have Medicare now if they like it, they love it. Even the rightwing tea partiers who came to Washington had signs that said: "Hands off my Medicare." The Republicans vilified Medicare.

How about another one? A Republican from Wyoming had this to say about Medicare:

I am disturbed about the effect this legislation would have upon our economy and upon our private insurance system . . .

In 1995, Dick Armey, the Republican House majority leader, said that Medicare is "a program I would have no part of in a free world."

I want people to understand that when the Republicans vilify the Affordable Care Act, they are doing exactly what they did on Social Security and Medicare. They were on the wrong side of history then and they are on the wrong side of history now. And, of course, Newt Gingrich said Medicare was "going to wither on the vine." Well, it would, if Republicans controlled this place.

Senate Majority Leader Dole said in 1996, "I was there, fighting the fight, voting against Medicare . . . because we knew it wouldn't work in 1965."

Folks, there is a big difference between the parties. When you see the Republicans start to vote again to repeal the Affordable Care Act, that is what they wanted to do to Social Security and that is what they wanted to do to Medicare. We stopped them then, and we will stop them now. All they want to do is repeal all of these great benefits that are helping millions of people, and I say to them: Enough already. Enough. Work with us. Let's make sure everyone in America has that sense of security that they can handle whatever health impacts hit their families.

I thank my colleague from Connecticut.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, we are here to point out that there are an awful lot of Americans who are winning because of the Affordable Care Act—whether it is a mom with kids who have gotten out of college but couldn't get health care on their own who can now stay on mom and dad's policy. That is one less thing for her to worry about—her 22- or 23-year-old children; that is a pretty big win.

Olive, who has been in touch with me, is a Rhode Islander from Woonsocket. She used to go into the doughnut hole every year because her husband has Alzheimer's and needs expensive medication. She saved \$2,400 in the first year alone. That is a significant benefit for Olive.

We have people who are trapped in their jobs because they couldn't get away. They were chained to their jobs because of the need of insurance. Alana, from Warwick, was one such person. She was working at one of our universities. She liked her job, but she really wanted to be a Web entrepreneur. She was tied to her job by employer-supplied health care. She went to HealthSource Rhode Island back in December and found a plan that worked for her. The plan's premium was so low she told me it sent her "over the moon." She has become the proud owner of her own Rhode Island small business because she had the confidence she could go forward. Stories such as Alana's abound not just in Rhode Island but across the country.

When I first came into our Rhode Island health exchange, the first person I saw who was ahead of me in line had boxes of Dunkin' Donuts and two big boxes of coffee. They had been there earlier in the afternoon, and the people who worked there were able to help them sign up for health insurance for the first time for their family. They were so thrilled they brought in doughnuts and coffee as a thank-you. That is the story we see.

I have to say that we have to look at what the problem was with health care. This is where we should be working together. Look at where the costs are

going; that is health care costs. In 1960, \$27 billion, and \$2.7 trillion in 2011. This was out of control. This was not going to be sustainable. Something absolutely, positively has to be done to get health care under control.

The unsung part of the Affordable Care Act is the part that begins the change in our delivery system reform so we can make our system affordable. Do we do it by taking things away from people? No. We do it by making the system better. How do we know that will work?

Here is a graph of all the major countries that are various kinds of competitors with us: Switzerland, Norway, Netherlands, Great Britain, Japan, and basically the rest of the major industrial nations. If you plot their life expectancy in years and their population against how much they spend per capita on health care, you get a pretty solid grouping through here, and you get a pretty clear curve that can be drawn through that.

Well, here is the U.S.A. We are way more per capita than the most expensive country—better than \$2,000 per person more per capita than the other most expensive countries in the world. Look at us for life expectancy. We come in around Chile and the Czech Republic, and we are below all of our competitors.

There is huge room for improvement—better health care at lower costs that will extend our lives and reduce the costs. If we just move back into this pack, we would save \$1 trillion a year in health care in this country—not just the government, but across the country. It would help businesses, it would help taxpayers, and it would help everybody.

There are different ways to do it. Here is one little example. This is people who are readmitted after they have gone into the hospital. What was happening was that after people got out of the hospital and went back to their nursing home or back to their house, their discharge plan was not very good. Their doctor may not have even known they were getting out, and they didn't know what to do with their medications. So what happens? Two weeks or a month later, they are back in the hospital again. We decided to do something about it in the Affordable Care Act.

This is the readmission rate. It was rocking along around 19 percent, and then along comes our bill in 2011, and it starts to drop. It starts to drop pretty dramatically. If we can keep that up, we save the money of all of those readmissions. You don't pay for a readmission that never happens. It is an absolute economic savings. Plus, the family doesn't have to worry about grandma going back into the hospital again and picking up a hospital-acquired infection or some other cost like that.

I thank the Senator from Connecticut, Senator MURPHY, for organizing us on the floor today.

I want to summarize that there is a great human interest story to tell

about the Affordable Care Act that is helping families not only in Rhode Island but across the country; and moreover, it is a great tool for us as I hope we can work together to improve our delivery system of health care so we are delivering better health care to Americans for a lower cost. We know we can do it. For crying out loud, if Greece and these other countries can do it, then by God so can the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE, who is an extraordinary leader on the issue of trying to control costs and improving quality. Senator STABENOW and Senator BOXER have been down here talking about the importance of the Affordable Care Act long before I got to this body, and I thank them for being with us as well.

Our message is pretty simple. Our message is that the Affordable Care Act is working. We know that because just yesterday we had record numbers of people who went onto the Web site to try to sign up for coverage. They placed calls into the call centers. We had 1.2 million people who went on the Web site yesterday looking for coverage. About 390,000 people placed a call.

We are seeing extraordinary levels of signups day after day. It looks as though we are on pace to achieve the goal to help those 6 million individuals sign up. That is not surprising because folks have been crying out in desperation for a better way for years and years. People such as one constituent of mine, Sean Hannon, from Weston, CT—I talked about him earlier on the floor today. He had a plan for him and his family that cost about \$1,400 a month. Under the Affordable Care Act and the Connecticut Exchange, he is now paying \$309. He wrote a really wonderful letter talking about what that means to him and his family, and he ended with this. He said:

We are sharing all of this personal information—

His family is sharing this personal information—

because there is an aggressive campaign underway to dismantle this valuable program. The misinformation being put out there is skewing public opinion and this must not happen.

Part of the reason why we have decided to come to the floor week after week is because Republicans who are spreading mythology about this law not working for people are chilling interest all across the country in signing up. Part of the reason why we are here on the floor is because there are Governors and State legislatures all around the country that are working to undermine the law rather than to implement the law. But in States such as California and Connecticut, that are actually working to make the law work, we are seeing record numbers of

people sign up, and we are seeing story after story such as the Hannonns.

In Connecticut, we had a goal of signing up about 100,000 to 120,000 people between Medicaid and the health care exchanges. Right now we have 170,000 people signed up. I don't know what our final number will be, but I imagine it will likely be double, if not more, of what our original estimate was. Why? Because we are actually going out and making it easy, simple for people to sign up. When we go out and make it easy for people to get affordable insurance, guess what. They want it.

Now that we are celebrating the 4-year mark of this law's being signed by President Obama, it is worthwhile to talk for a second about what the reality was before the law was passed and what the reality of the law is today because that explains why we are seeing this overflow of interest in this final week of signup.

Before the passage of this law, there were 3.4 million seniors who were Medicare Part D enrollees—that is the prescription drug benefit—who were falling into the doughnut hole. There was about 15 percent of those using drugs in that doughnut hole who were skipping or stopping medications when they reached that gap in coverage. The average senior could be paying out as much as \$160 in cost-sharing for certain procedures such as colorectal cancer screenings, paying lots and lots of money in preventive health care copays that had effectively stopped a lot of seniors from getting that wellness coverage they so badly needed.

So what has happened after the passage of the law? There are 7.9 million seniors who are now in the doughnut hole and saving, on average, about \$1,200 in drug costs. That is \$9.9 billion being saved by seniors because of the Affordable Care Act. Thirty-seven million seniors all across the country have taken advantage of the free preventive care, getting at least one free preventive service now that the law is in effect.

Let's look at the other end of the age spectrum. Before this law was passed, 31.4 percent of young adults between ages 19 and 25 lacked coverage. That was nearly double the national rate. We are seeing young people flock to sign up for these health care exchanges, but even before that, about 3 million young adults all across the country had gained coverage because the health care law allows them to stay on their parents' coverage until age 26.

Before the law, women often paid 50 percent more in premiums because of gender rating—the idea that one could be charged more as a woman simply because she is a woman. Put another way, being female was listed by many insurance companies as a preexisting condition. After the law, gender rating was banned, and women are on equity with men in terms of the rates they pay.

For middle-class families that have been struggling with health care costs because of a crippling illness, they now never have to worry about losing coverage simply because someone gets sick or not being able to afford coverage in the first place because of a preexisting condition. A world in which 60 percent of all personal bankruptcies were reported to be related to medical costs will be history in this country.

Four years after the passage of the law, that is the reality of what life was like before: Seniors paying thousands of dollars more in prescription drug costs, young adults unable to get coverage, women paying more for health care simply because they are women. The new reality is much different.

I imagine that is also why a new poll out this week tells us that 60 percent of Americans want to keep the Affordable Care Act in place. They may entertain some minor changes to the law, but less than 20 percent of Americans want to see this law repealed.

There is a total incongruity between what people out there believe, what they are experiencing, and what we are hearing as the reality from our Republican colleagues. That is why we are going to come down to the floor week after week and talk about how the Affordable Care Act is working for millions of Americans.

Finally, I wish to share one story because Republicans are very good at coming down and telling stories about people who have disagreements with the law. We are beginning to see an overflow of stories and anecdotes from people whose lives are being transformed.

Anne Masterson, from Norwich, CT, writes this:

Because of a minor preexisting condition, I was unable to get health insurance as an individual. I could get it through my business, my own law practice. I've always opted for good coverage, but I paid dearly for it. My premiums this year increased \$965 a month—equivalent to a second mortgage payment.

Let's just break that down. What she is saying is she could get coverage through her business, but she couldn't get coverage as an individual, and that was the real story for decades when it came to individuals who had a preexisting condition. For many of them, it wasn't a matter of just having to pay more for health care; they couldn't get insurance at all because of a preexisting condition, and that was the real world for Anne Masterson.

She further goes on to say this:

Part of my practice is representing children and the elderly in local probate courts. While not very lucrative, it's one of the most professionally satisfying things I do. I feel like I make a difference. However, with the increased premiums, I don't know how I could continue to pay for my health insurance.

Let's break that down for a second. Think of all the people all across this country who are stuck in a job simply because they have to get health care for them and their family. Think of all of the innovation that is being stymied

because people can't go out and start a business because it would involve taking the risk of going for a period of time without health care.

Anne was contemplating giving up work she loved, work she was good at, representing children and the elderly—maybe one of the most important jobs we have in our legal system—because she couldn't afford to pay the premiums on that salary.

She finishes by saying:

Under the Affordable Care Act silver plan, I'll have the exact same Anthem policy I have now—and pay nearly \$600 less per month. Not only will I have the peace of mind of having good health insurance, but I'll also be able to continue representing our most vulnerable citizens.

We should step back and try to think about what our job really is here. We get consumed with studies and numbers and data, but really our job is to protect the security of this country and to try to increase the quality of life for the people we represent. It is hard to sometimes measure whether we are doing a good job at increasing the quality of life, but it is really about trying to make sure the people we represent are happy.

Happiness comes in all sorts of different ways, but happiness had been stolen from millions of families across the country because every morning they would wake up thinking about how sick they were or how sick their child was or how sick their husband or wife was and their inability to pay for it.

We hear those words “peace of mind” come up over and over when people talk about the Affordable Care Act. Yes, they are getting better coverage. Yes, they are healthier, but they just feel better about their existence in this world because they no longer have to worry about being part of the 60 percent of bankruptcies caused by medical debt. They no longer have to worry whether their child is going to have to have their life dictated by the terms of their illness.

We can talk about the 5 million people who have signed up in exchanges all across the country or the fact that, as Senator WHITEHOUSE says, the Federal Government is slated to save \$1.2 trillion as compared to previous estimates on health care costs. We can talk about the \$9 billion that seniors are saving because of the Affordable Care Act when it comes to prescription drug costs. But if we really want to talk about the transformation in the Affordable Care Act, if we really want to read into all of these letters we are getting in increasing volumes, it is about the fact that people don't have to wake up every day worrying about health care, worrying about getting sick, worrying about how they are going to pay for an illness.

Maybe, in the end, when this law is fully implemented and ultimately Republicans come to this floor and defend it, just as they do Medicare, that will be the true measure of how the Affordable Care Act works.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

UKRAINE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, tomorrow we are going to have an opportunity to vote on S. 2124, and I am pleased to learn that it looks as if there is going to be overwhelming support in the Senate for the passage of S. 2124. This is the legislation that helps Ukraine in dealing with the invasion by Russia.

Russia's illegal actions of using its military to overtake Crimea, a part of Ukraine, violate numerous international obligations that Russia has committed to.

I have the honor of chairing the U.S. Helsinki Commission. The Helsinki Accords were entered into in 1975. Russia was one of the leading forces for forming the OSCE.

Russia's taking over of Crimea violates its commitments it made under the Helsinki Final Act. It violates the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which was signed by the United States, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, and Russia, that guaranteed basically Ukraine's integrity of its land. It violates the 1997 Ukraine-Russia bilateral treaty. It violates the U.N. Charter. The list goes on and on and on.

So I believe it is absolutely essential that we have a strong voice in standing with the people of Ukraine. There was absolutely no justification whatsoever for Russia's action. There was no threat to any of the ethnic communities in Ukraine. All the rights of the people were being protected. The country was in transition from a corrupt government to a government that respected the rights of its citizens. If there was any provocation whatsoever of any unrest, it was caused by Russia's presence in Ukraine.

We got reports from the chief rabbi in Kiev that Russia was staging anti-Semitic provocations in Crimea, and the list goes on and on as to what Russia was doing in order to try to give some justification for its actions.

Russia's thinly veiled landgrab, cloaked in the cloth of self-determination, must not go unchallenged. Here is what I think is critically important: This is a dangerous precedent. We saw Russia use a similar action in Georgia, and now in Crimea in Ukraine. There are other territorial issues involved

around the world. If this goes unchecked, if we do not speak with a unified voice, it just encourages more irresponsible action by Russia in other countries.

We know that we have concerns about the South China Sea. We know we have concerns about Moldova. There are many other areas where Russia could be involved in its border areas.

So all of these issues are matters for us to speak with a strong unified voice. S. 2124 does that. It does it in two principal ways.

First, it imposes the sanctions against those responsible for Russia's invasion into Crimea, Ukraine. It provides sanctions so that these individuals are not permitted to come to the United States. There are economic sanctions in regard to the use of our banking system. These are similar sanctions to what are now being imposed by our European allies.

We need to isolate Russia. As we all know, the G8, which included Russia, is now a G7 without Russia. Russia needs to know that there will be sanctions imposed, and they will be stronger sanctions unless they stop this aggressive action.

In addition, the legislation provides economic assistance to the new Government of Ukraine. Just 2 weeks ago the Prime Minister of Ukraine was here and met with Members of the Senate. I tell you, it was inspirational to listen to his vision for Ukraine as a democratic, independent state, with full integration into Europe. That is important. He is preparing for a May 25 election for the Presidency of Ukraine.

These are all very, very positive steps. But if Ukraine does not have the economic foothold to be able to develop the type of economy and strength in their country, it will be difficult for Ukraine to be maintained as a viable independent state.

Here is where the United States and our European allies, and I hope the global community, come together, as we have in this legislation, to provide economic help on a restructured economic plan for Ukraine that will help them move forward in a very constructive way.

Mr. President, I must tell you I am disappointed, though, that the reforms of the IMF will be eliminated from this legislation. I think that is regrettable. We are entering into a plan for Ukraine that very much depends upon the IMF's—the International Monetary Fund's—plan to make sure that the moneys we are spending, Europe is spending, and other countries are loaning and providing to Ukraine are based upon a sound economic plan that will work. That is why the IMF is there. And they will be there. But the United States needs to be a full participant in the IMF. We are out of compliance, and here is another opportunity lost for us to be in full compliance with the IMF. I am disappointed about that.

But as I said as I took the floor, we must speak with one voice—the Obama

administration; the House, the Senate; the Congress—as we stand with the people of Ukraine for their integrity, for their independence, and for the adherence to international principles, which Russia has clearly violated.

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

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

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

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

THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, on October 16, 1936, President Roosevelt visited the then-largest city in Ohio, the town my wife and I live in, Cleveland, OH. He spoke about why the “trickle down” theory does not work—this whole view that has been tried a number of times in our country: trickle down economics—that trickle down economics does not work. That is when you give major tax breaks to the wealthiest people in the country.

President Roosevelt called them “economic royalists”—a term that sounds a little out of date but maybe fairly descriptive. But President Roosevelt said when you help the wealthy get wealthier and wealthier—my Republican colleagues call them the “job creators,” but it just does not work that way; the hope then is that some of that wealth they accumulate—and we do not resent their wealth, we do not envy their wealth; we just do not think it is good economic policy for Toledo or Gallipolis or Chillicothe or Cleveland—that when the wealthiest people get richer and richer, it does not really trickle down and create jobs.

Forget Franklin Roosevelt for a minute. Look at two decades in very recent memory—the 1990s during the Clinton years and the 8 years during the Bush years. From 1993 to 2000, the Clinton years, we actually reduced the budget deficit to the point where there was a surplus. There was an increase in taxes on upper income people and some budget cuts. But what happened during that 8 years is that 21 million private sector jobs were added to our economy between 1993 and 2000—21 million private sector jobs.

Then President Bush took office. Twice—once in 2001 and once in 2003—with the assistance of kind of a bought-and-sold special interest Congress in those days, President Bush gave major tax cuts to the wealthiest people in this country. You know the theory, “trickle down.” You give tax breaks to the rich and it trickles down to moderate-income, middle-class people and creates jobs. Well, the middle class shrank during those 8 years. President

Bush gave major tax cuts to the rich twice. Do you know how many jobs were created during those 8 years? Under 1 million private sector jobs.

So from 1993 to 2000 when we did not follow trickle-down economics, there were 21 million private sector jobs. During the 8 years of the Bush administration, there were big tax cuts for the rich—twice. There was essentially no real job creation in the private sector.

A number of my colleagues want to continue that policy. But let's look at it the other way. The real job creation is not tax breaks for the richest people, it trickles down, and maybe some jobs will be created for the middle class and for low-income people. Let's look at it the other way. Let's look at it as the real job creation is from the bottom up. One of the ways to do that is a minimum wage increase. It will not mean everything, but look at this. The minimum wage today is worth \$7.25 an hour nationally, in some States a little bit higher. My State is 90 cents higher than that, I believe. But the minimum wage today has one-third less buying power than it did in 1968. In 1968 a couple with minimum wage jobs—a husband and wife—actually had an OK standard of living. They were not doing great, but they were making it. They could afford to pay their rent. They could afford a car. They could afford some things. They were doing sort of OK.

The minimum wage today—again, a minimum wage job—has one-third less buying power than it had in 1968. But think about this: The minimum wage for tipped employees—I imagine a number of the pages who are sitting here today are not indicative; it is really older people generally who have had minimum wage jobs and have had jobs where they rely on tips. It is a myth that minimum wage jobs are held by mostly teenagers. They are not. Minimum wage jobs are often held by people supporting themselves, and they are supporting kids sometimes on minimum wage jobs. They are not teenagers or mostly in their twenties and thirties.

But get this. Do you know how much the tipped minimum wage is? It is \$2.13 an hour. That means when you see a valet at an airport—if you go to Cleveland Hopkins Airport and you see someone pushing a wheelchair with an often older disabled person in it, those are tipped jobs. Those people do not even make \$7.25 an hour. But they can make as little as \$2.13 an hour. Do you know the last time they got a raise, the last time the tipped minimum wage was raised? It was 1992. For 20-plus years the tipped minimum wage has been \$2.13 an hour. It has been that for 20 years. That means that the waitress in the diner, the server in the diner, the valet in front of the restaurant, the person pushing the wheelchair or driving the cart at the airport, the person working in the hotel, their minimum wage is \$2.13 an hour.

The people opposed to this minimum wage increase—to me, some of the most self-absorbed interest groups in this country and some of the best off—say: Well, nobody really makes that because people get these tips.

Well, if they work at a really high-end restaurant where the average patron will spend \$75 or \$100, buy a few drinks, where there is an expensive menu and all of that, the waiters do a little better. They make \$50,000 or \$60,000 or \$70,000 a year if they are busy enough and if they are working enough hours, some even more than that. But in the diner where three retirees will come in on a Tuesday morning and drink coffee and sit there for 2 hours and take up a table, that waitress is usually a woman who is a sub-minimum wage tipped employee. The people may leave \$1 on the table, and she has worked for 2 hours. All they buy is coffee, and she keeps filling it up and filling it up. Think about the wear and tear on her body. She is standing on her feet all the time. She is working hard. You know, we like to think we work hard in the Senate. We do, but we do not do that and it is not so hard on our bodies.

When I think about this minimum wage—I am never angry about politics. One of my heroes was Hubert Humphrey. They called him the “Happy Warrior” because he always fought for justice but he was not angry. But there are some things that make me angry about this job, such as when I see some of my colleagues—and there are a number of them—vote for pay increases for themselves and then vote against the minimum wage. They may tell you they work hard. They are not working harder than that person pushing the cart at the airport. They are not working harder than the woman in the diner who is filling the coffee cup.

I urge my colleagues to do something that Pope Francis mentioned. Pope Francis exhorted his parish priests to go out and smell like the flock. You think about the Biblical allegory of that, the sheep and the Old Testament and the shepherd. When he said “go out and smell like the flock” to his parish priests, what he was saying is pretty obvious: Go out and find out how they live. Go out and try to live among them. Go out and do what they do. Go out and understand their way of life.

I ask my colleagues to think about it. I am not asking them to live on a minimum wage job. I am not asking them to wait tables. But I do ask them to spend some time talking to people about the hopes and dreams for their children and in their lives, people who are minimum wage workers, people making \$7.25 an hour and working hard, people who are making less than that and rely on tips that may or may not be there.

It is justice. Are we going to reward work? If so, we ought to increase the minimum wage. At the same time, we ought to expand the earned-income tax credit. It actually rewards work. If you

are a trickle-down economics guy—and most of them are guys—and you believe that you reward people by cutting their taxes so they will work harder, maybe we ought to think about rewarding hard-working lower income people with tax breaks. For someone making \$28,000 a year, that extra thousand dollars really means they can maybe put a little aside for their kid's community college or maybe they can actually go out to eat once in a while or maybe they can occasionally buy a really nice dinner for their kids or maybe they can buy school supplies or whatever with that extra thousand or two thousand dollars from the earned-income tax credit.

We need to increase the minimum wage and the earned-income tax credit. It will not only be better for those families, it will help the economy because you put money into the economy. The unemployed worker or a minimum wage worker is going to spend that money. They are not going to invest it in a Swiss bank account the way some wealthy people might; they are going to spend that money, and that is going to create jobs in the local community. So increasing the minimum wage and expanding the earned-income tax credit is good for those families, it is good for those communities, and it is good for our economy. It is something we ought to do.

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. I would ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNEMPLOYMENT EXTENSION

Mr. CASEY. Thank you very much.

I rise tonight to speak about emergency unemployment compensation. We know by the acronyms around here people refer to unemployment insurance as UI. What we are talking about in the real world are literally millions of Americans affected in one way or another because they have been out of work, unemployed for long periods of time.

By one estimate the number of Americans who have been out of work for 6 months or longer—and many of these individuals have been out of work for a lot more than 6 months, but when the line is drawn of 6 months or longer, it is more than 4 million Americans. It is a big number. I will talk a little bit more about the Pennsylvania impact and walk through some of those numbers.

This legislation that is finally coming together after many weeks is going to be, and I think must be, a bipartisan compromise. That is the only way to move forward. It is an effort to provide an essential lifeline—that is not an

overstatement and may be an understatement—an essential lifeline to middle-class families who rely upon the program to stay afloat as they are actively seeking work. I think what is sometimes lost in the discussion is these are folks who are trying to work, trying to find a job again.

I would have preferred a much longer extension than the one that is being discussed and worked on. I also would have hoped that people relying upon this type of compensation—emergency unemployment compensation—would not have to see their benefits lapse. Extending this program has always been bipartisan, and we need to make sure we keep it in that vein. While our economy has made substantial improvements, we have a long way to go. Families are still hurting and they need help.

Unfortunately, when families read the business page of their local newspaper, some of the numbers look pretty good. But if you are out of work for any period of time, especially 6 months or longer, it doesn't really matter what is on the business page or what the overall assessment is; it is very difficult for that individual or family because they are not working, and because they are not working they are not able to help their family.

We know that in addition to being the lifeline for families—an essential connection to any kind of economic security—the other reason it is important to have the emergency unemployment compensation passed is because of the economic boost it provides. Emergency unemployment compensation provides an economic jump start.

Just by way of example, in 2012, Mark Zandi, one of our more respected economists on both sides of the aisle, found that for every dollar of emergency unemployment compensation there was a \$1.52 economic impact—or new economic activity resulted. That is the old spend a buck, and what do you get for spending the buck? You spend a buck on this, you get a buck fifty-two in return. That is a substantial return on that investment.

Recent analysis specifically focusing on the extension of benefits in 2014 has also found a large economic boost. The Economic Policy Institute has estimated that extending unemployment benefits in 2014 would generate \$37.8 billion in economic activity. We know that this is an issue—unemployment, emergency unemployment or long-term unemployment—that varies depending on the State, but we know every State has been affected and almost every community has been affected in a very substantial way.

Pennsylvania is a big and diverse State with more than 12 million people. In some ways it tends to broadly reflect what is happening in various parts of the country. In Pennsylvania 73,300 people immediately stopped receiving unemployment benefits when the emergency unemployment compensation expired on December 28, 2014.

That was kind of the beginning of the current crisis for these families. They have been living through a very difficult economy for years now. They have been out of work for many months, and in some cases more than a year or two, but the current crisis started for them on December 28.

I can't even imagine what it is like for them. You are at the end of the holiday season, you are out of work, you have been robbed of your dignity and your ability to contribute to your family's well-being, and on top of all of that—in the middle of the holiday season when it is supposed to be a time of hope and optimism and gift giving and all kinds of family time—you, and perhaps another member of the family, lose your emergency unemployment compensation. That is where it started.

Because Congress didn't have a bipartisan consensus until recently, the days and weeks started to add up. So when you go from December 28 to March 1—and we can take another look at the numbers—unfortunately, and not surprisingly, those numbers went up. As of March 1, 105,000 Pennsylvanians lost their benefits. It gets worse than that. If it continues, and there is not some relief provided through May—and this is the period that would be covered by the bill—it is estimated that 158,400 Pennsylvanians and some 2,795,300 Americans who could benefit from this bill will lose their unemployment compensation.

It is very simple in terms of the choice we have to make. We need to decide in the very near future—we hope starting this week so we can begin the process of finally getting this done—whether we will help almost 2.8 million Americans and almost 160,000 Pennsylvanians. It is a very simple choice. We are going to take either one path or the other. I hope and pray we take the path that helps those almost 3 million Americans and almost 160,000 Pennsylvanians.

Earlier I mentioned the economic impact of passing this kind of legislation. We know that in Pennsylvania, for example, one estimate shows that extending benefits would provide a boost to consumption and economic activity which would save an estimated 15,000 jobs. That is another way to measure the impact of this program.

It is my hope that the Senate can swiftly pass this bipartisan legislation to extend emergency unemployment compensation and that the House will take it up and pass it without delay. We can't allow politics to stand in the way of helping families in need.

This is a basic and fundamental issue. These families and individuals have waited far too long. I will conclude with just one example. A couple of Sundays ago—maybe 3 weeks ago—I was walking out of church in our neighborhood and a woman came up to me. I didn't know her, but I recognized her from the neighborhood. She asked me about this issue. She said: I'm out of work; when do you think it will

pass? She asked me the same question a couple of weeks before that. I said: I think we are getting to the point where there is a consensus. On that particular Sunday—just a couple of weeks ago—she asked me again. When she started to ask the question, she asked it with a seriousness and an earnestness and a kind of worry in her voice that caught my attention. I said something like: I think we are starting to get there, but I can't say for sure when. When I gave that answer, she looked at me and she started to become very emotional and said: I hope you are reaching the point where you can pass something because it is going to be very difficult for me to hang on any longer.

This is very tough. I felt at that moment—as an elected official who was given power by the voters to vote and represent them—if not powerless, I was not doing nearly enough for her. I am part of an institution that has not come together yet—in the Senate and in the other body as well. We have not come together to answer her question with full confidence and to say: Yes, we understand. We understand what you are up against to the extent we can—not having lived through this ourselves—and we are going to act this week or tomorrow or the next day.

Not having a specific answer for her gave me a sense of not just frustration but a sense of failure. There was a sense of urgency that she brought to my attention, and I believe almost every Member here could probably tell a similar story.

We have to act. We have to get this done, and we have to make sure we undertake every effort in the next few days—and I hope we are talking days now—to get this done so we can finally provide a measure of relief which is short term but will have the effect of providing a measure of relief to families who have suffered in ways I can't even imagine.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The 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 PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JOHN B. OWENS TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 573.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of John B. Owens, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a cloture motion at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative 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 John B. Owens, of California, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Bill Nelson, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Jack Reed, Tammy Baldwin, Jon Tester, Tom Udall, Bernard Sanders, Michael F. Bennet, Christopher A. Coons, Elizabeth Warren, Charles E. Schumer, Sheldon Whitehouse, Richard Blumenthal, Richard J. Durbin.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

The motion was agreed to.

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

Mr. REID. Mr. President, is the motion to proceed to H.R. 3979 now pending?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion to proceed is now pending.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, that being the case, I have a cloture motion that has been filed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative 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 motion to proceed to Calendar No. 333, H.R. 3979, an act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Harry Reid, Jack Reed, Patty Murray, Bill Nelson, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tammy Baldwin, Jon Tester, Tom Udall, Bernard Sanders, Michael F.