

category, Medicaid means when they walk into a hospital facing a medical emergency or need for care, they will not walk away leaving bills behind them. Their bills will be paid by the Medicaid system, and that is part of what we are trying to achieve—the personal responsibility that every person, every family, and every business will have a responsibility to have health insurance and an opportunity for an affordable alternative.

The free enterprise system is a strong system. The free enterprise system created unfairness and injustice when it came to health care, which we are addressing with this Affordable Care Act.

I yield the floor for Senator HARKIN and thank him for his leadership on this issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I want to thank our majority whip again for telling it like it is and what is happening with health care in America today. We have come too far to turn back. We have made tremendous changes in the way people are going to access the health care system in America because of the Affordable Care Act.

Look, we all admit there were mistakes made. Were there glitches? Yes. But we went from a system where people were excluded from getting health care, and Senator DURBIN talked about them. There are various people with preexisting conditions, kids and people who had no access to health care whatsoever, and now they are covered. That is a huge leap in this country. We made some mistakes, had a few glitches, and we worked those out.

Our friends on the other side say: No, ditch the whole thing. Get rid of everything. Turn the clock back. I agree with the Senator from Illinois, people don't want to turn the clock back. They want to move ahead. They are getting covered more than ever before with affordable coverage they have never had before and we are not going to turn the clock back. I thank the Senator.

#### MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I want to take the time this morning to talk about an issue that has been brewing for a long time and is going to come to a head in the Senate sometime in the next several days, I hope, and it is one which compels us to do something, and that is to raise the minimum wage in the United States of America. We have waited too long to do this, and so we have to act on it as soon as possible.

I wish to point out some of the data and some of the statistics confronting us right now. First of all, why should anyone be afraid of voting to raise the minimum wage? The American people are way ahead of us on this. Let's look at the polling data.

This chart shows the results of a poll to increase the minimum wage to \$10.10

an hour. It shows that 73 percent of all voters want to raise the minimum wage, and that 90 percent of Democrats, 71 percent of Independents, and even 53 percent of Republicans say we ought to be raise the minimum wage. The vast majority of American people want to do this.

This is again a chart from across the country. We have Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, my State of Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Wisconsin—52 percent, 73 percent, 61 percent, and 54 percent. The vast majority of Americans in these States say: Yes, we need to raise the minimum wage, so it is not just one part of the country.

Small business owners support raising the minimum wage. A poll done of small business owners shows that 57 percent say we should raise the minimum wage as opposed to 43 percent. Small businesses get it.

The voters say that raising the minimum wage will help the economy. This comports with over 600 economists—including what several Nobel prize economists have said—who say that raising the minimum wage will boost aggregate demand and raise the GDP in America. The economy will benefit.

Well, you know what. The American people get it. They may not understand all of the intricacies of economics and economic analysis, but they get it. Of those who were polled, 56 percent believe it will help the economy, 22 percent said they don't know, and only 21 percent say it will hurt the economy. The vast majority of Americans understand in their bones that raising the minimum wage is going to help the economy. Why? Because they know it will put more spending power in their pockets.

When people in lower wage jobs get more money, what do they do? They don't go to Europe, they don't buy private islands and private jets, they spend it in the local economy, such as Main Street, where the small businesses are. Again, the American people get it.

Why should we be concerned about this right now? The minimum wage has not kept up with average wages. In 1968, the minimum wage was 53 percent of the average wage in America. Today it is 36 percent of the average wage in America, which is a tremendous decline between those who get the minimum wage and what the average wages are in America.

Since 2009, the last time we had an increase in the minimum wage, let's look at what happened to the things that low-income people have to spend their money on. As I said, they are not renting private jets and they are not going to fancy restaurants to eat, but they do have to spend money on electricity, rent, auto repair, food at home, childcare, and mass transit. So the minimum wage has gone up 0 percent since 2009. Electricity has gone up 4.2 percent, rent has gone up 7.3 percent, auto repair has gone up 7.6 percent,

food at home has gone up 8.8 percent, childcare has gone up 11.7 percent, and mass transit has had a 18-percent increase. If you are a minimum wage worker, all of your costs have gone up, but your income has basically stayed the same.

Here is another thing the American people get; they understand this. CEOs get big raises. Since 2009, the last time we had an increase in the minimum wage, CEO raises have gone up 23 percent, 14 percent, and 5 percent, which is about 40-some percent. Minimum wage has stayed the same. Those at the top keep getting more and more and more, but low-income workers get nothing. They keep falling further and further behind.

How are we doing compared to other countries? We always say, we are doing all right. What are we doing compared to other countries? Here is an example of the national minimum wage rate in nominal U.S. dollars. Right now the United States is third from the bottom. There is Portugal, Spain, and there is the United States. Look at who is ahead of us: Austria, Japan, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Ireland, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, and Australia. Australia's minimum wage is \$16.34 an hour in U.S. dollars. France's minimum wage is \$11.98, Ireland is \$11.16; New Zealand is at \$10.96 an hour. We are way behind other countries in what the minimum wage is.

Here is who benefits: Twenty-eight million workers will get a raise if we raise the minimum wage. Fifteen million women, thirteen million men, four million African-American workers—I will have more to say about that—7 million Hispanic workers, and 7 million parents will get a raise. Again, that is not just minimum wage workers. Almost everyone who makes less than \$10.10 an hour—and many who earn just above \$10.10—will get a raise. It will not just be those who are making \$7.25, there will be a lot of other people who will also get a raise.

That is another thing I have heard from my Republican friends. They say: Well, there are a lot of people who are making up to \$40,000 a year and families will make more money. That is true. Raising the minimum wage will not just help people who are in poverty. It is true that it helps to get them out of poverty, but it also helps low-income families. Let's say there are two workers in the family and they are both low-income workers. They are making above the minimum wage, but they are low income. Perhaps you have a family with three kids and the breadwinner makes a decent income of \$30,000 and the other makes minimum wage; that family too will get an increase.

Here is what happens: About 21 percent of workers in America will get a raise, and almost everyone has family income of less than \$60,000 a year. Eighty-three percent of workers who will get a raise under my bill are in

American families making less than \$60,000 a year; that is middle America. There are a few workers—17 percent—that economists tell us have family income over \$60,000, that will also get a boost. But the majority are families making less than \$60,000 a year. It is a middle-class bill.

Raising the minimum wage helps middle-class families, and it also does one other important thing—it helps kids. We don't think about this a lot. There are 14 million kids who will benefit from raising the minimum wage—14 million kids who are now in low-income families and struggling to get by.

I thought it was interesting that the American Pediatric Association—the folks you take your babies to to see the doctor and stuff—says raising the minimum wage will help our kids. It will help them to develop better, have better oral health, better immunization rates, and decrease the rate of obesity and its complications. The American Pediatric Association Task Force on Child Poverty supports raising the minimum wage. They get it. They see these kids in poverty and low income. They know what is happening to them. By raising the minimum wage, you will help kids have a better life and a better start in life.

I will talk a little bit about the basics of this bill. First of all, our bill, the Minimum Wage Fairness Act, would raise the minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour—where it has been since 2009—to \$10.10 an hour in three steps: 95 cents, 95 cents, and 95 cents over 3 years. We then index it to inflation in the future, so no longer will people who make the minimum wage fall below the poverty line. We keep it above the poverty line.

The third thing our bill does is raise the minimum wage for tipped workers. Can my colleagues believe this? When I tell people this, they say: No, you must be wrong, HARKIN.

Tipped workers in America today have a minimum wage of \$2.13 an hour. People say that can't be right. It is. It has been at \$2.13 an hour since 1991. Imagine that—\$2.13. Our bill would raise that from \$2.13 an hour, over about a 6-year period of time, to 70 percent of the minimum wage, which is much closer to what it was historically, before 1991. So it raises it to 70 percent of the minimum wage over 6 years and then indexes that also in the future.

So, again, why did we settle on \$10.10 an hour? Why not \$9? I have heard that bandied about a lot. Well, here is why we raised it: because we know where the poverty line is. Back in 1968 the minimum wage was 120 percent of poverty. So we said: If we raise the minimum wage and we want to get it just above the poverty line and index it for the future so we wouldn't fall below, where would that be? Well, to get to 107 percent of the poverty line—just above the poverty line—it would be \$10.10. So, again, in 1968 the minimum wage was 120 percent of the poverty line. Now it

is at 81 percent of the poverty line, and our bill would raise it to 107 percent of the above line for a family of three. That is why we raise it to \$10.10—because it hits above the poverty line—and then we index it in the future.

Let's look at the historic average on this. People say: Isn't that a big increase?

Well, historically, whenever we have raised the minimum wage, the percent increase has been about 41 percent. Our bill raises it 39 percent. So we wanted to keep it also within the boundaries of what we have done in the past. Going clear back to 1939, the average has been about 41 percent.

My colleagues might notice that in the 1990s there was a 27 percent and a 21 percent increase. That is because for some odd reason we raised it twice in the 1990s.

So we looked at the decades. Historically, we have raised the minimum wage about once every decade. If we look at it in the decades, we are again right about average: 150 percent, 33, 60, 81; in the 1980s it was only 16; then in the 1990s we had two steps, 54 percent. In 2007 when we passed it we raised it 41 percent. By the way, that was signed into law by a Republican President, not a Democratic President.

So we wanted to get it above the poverty line, index it there but keep it within the boundaries of sort of what we have done in the past, and that is what this bill does. So it is critical to get it above the poverty line.

The minimum wage has lost 32 percent of its purchasing power. So 1968—if we had kept the minimum wage at the same relative status from 1968 to now, the minimum wage would be \$10.71 an hour. It is now \$7.25. So in those years 32 percent of its purchasing power has been lost by minimum wage workers.

Again, I want to cover tipped wages a little bit because that is another important part of our bill.

People say: Well, tipped wages—people make tips and all that.

We keep hearing from some entities that if we raise the tipped wage, it is going to hurt the economy and it is going to hurt the restaurant business. That is just not so. Look at the poverty rates.

This chart shows restaurant servers, right here. If we take a State that has a \$2.13 minimum wage, which is the Federal minimum wage for tipped workers—the poverty rate among tipped restaurant workers is 19.4 percent. Some States have already said they are going to have their tipped wages the same as the minimum wage. They have done that. Where we have a full State minimum wage for tipped workers the same as everybody else, the poverty rate just among restaurant workers falls to 13.6 percent.

If we look at all tipped workers—and a lot of people think that with tipped workers, we are only talking about people who wait on tables. That is not so. Forty percent of all tipped workers

are not restaurant workers. Right now, we are talking about pizza delivery people, parking lot attendants, people who work in hair salons, including manicurists—that is about 40 percent of tipped workers.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. HARKIN. I ask unanimous consent for another 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HARKIN. I thank the Senator for allowing me a few more minutes.

The point being, if we look at all tipped workers in States with a \$2.13 minimum wage, the poverty rate is 16.1 percent. Where a State has a minimum wage the same for tipped and not tipped, the poverty rate is 12.1 percent.

We also hear that job growth will be lost if we increase the minimum wage. Well, again, we have done some data-taking. If we look at tipped restaurant worker job growth, just from 2009 to 2012, in States that have a \$2.13 minimum wage—tipped wage, the same as Federal—the job growth among restaurant workers has been 2 percent. In a State that has a minimum wage for tipped workers the same as everybody else, the job growth has been twice as much—4 percent. This is just among tipped restaurant workers.

Look over here at sales per capita in restaurants. This is sales per capita in the State. In those States with a \$2.13 minimum wage, \$1.42 per capita; in States with a full minimum wage, \$1.68 per capita. That is why economists are saying raising the minimum wage and raising the tipped minimum wage is good for the economy. It increases aggregate demand.

People say: Why would this job growth be more? Why would the sales be more in a State with a higher minimum wage for restaurant workers?

Easy. If the restaurant workers themselves are making enough money to go out and eat or to do other things, they increase the wages for all of the other restaurant workers in the State. That is true. How many times have I heard from people who wait on tables, restaurant workers, say: I wish I could make some more money. I would like to go out to eat sometimes too.

But they don't make enough money to do that. But in the States where they have a full State minimum wage, both job growth and sales per capita are much greater.

Lastly, this is what is unconscionable. This is a restaurant worker in the District of Columbia. She got a paycheck, and her paycheck is for zero dollars and zero cents. Have my colleagues ever seen a paycheck for zero dollars? Why is that? Because she is a tipped worker making \$2.77, and after they took out her FICA taxes and other taxes and things such as that, she got zero dollars. So therefore she had to rely upon only her tips.

But what are tips? Here is what a lot of people don't understand. How do we

classify a tipped worker? How do we do that? If a person makes more than \$30 a month in tips, a person can be classified as a tipped worker. Think about that—if a person makes more than \$30 a month. So if a person works 5 days a week for a month, that is \$1.50 a day. If a person makes more than \$1.50 a day in tips, a person can be classified as a tipped worker and be paid \$2.13 an hour. We look at that and say that can't be right. But it is right. That is exactly what is happening.

Tipped workers are getting to be at the bottom of the barrel. Yet we rely upon them for so many things—people pushing wheelchairs in the airport, valet attendants, parking attendants. There are a lot of people who are classified as tipped workers if they make more than \$30 a month in tips—\$1.50 a day. Think about that—\$1.50 a day. They get that, they get classified as a tipped worker, and they can be paid \$2.13 an hour.

So, again, the time has come. The people of America understand this. Working families understand it. This is a civil rights bill. It is a women's issue bill. I say it is a civil rights bill because if we look at the people who are going to get benefits—13 million people—28 percent of African-American workers, 32 percent of Hispanic workers, 19 percent of Asian and other workers will get a raise. This is a civil rights bill. It is a women's issue bill because 55 percent of the people in America making low wages who will get a raise are women. It is a children's issue. Kids who aren't getting adequate health care and nutrition and childcare are the kids of people making the minimum wage or tipped wages, even less. So it is a civil rights issue, it is a women's issue, it is a kids issue, and it is an economic issue for America.

It is time to give America a raise and raise the minimum wage.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

#### JOBS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about jobs. Once again, this week the Senate is taking up an extension of unemployment benefits, which will be the 13th such extension since 2008.

Arguably, of course, we came out of an economic downturn and a lot of people were hurt by that; a lot of people were in need of help and assistance. Yet here we are, 6 years later, and we are still talking about extending unemployment benefits. Why? Because we haven't created enough jobs necessary to get the people who have been unemployed for a period of time back to work. Once again we have Senate Democrats ignoring the real issue, which is the lack of jobs that has left so many Americans struggling to find work.

The solution to years of high unemployment is not perpetual extensions of

unemployment benefits but the creation of new jobs—steady, good-paying jobs with the opportunity for advancement. Workers don't want to spend years on meager government benefits; they want to return to work. But in order for that to happen, there have to be jobs available, and there haven't been too many jobs over the past 5 years.

That is why Republicans have proposed a number of amendments to the unemployment insurance legislation that would remove obstacles to job creation and encourage businesses to expand and hire new workers. Unfortunately, Democrats have shown little interest in job creation over the past 5 years, so they are happy to extend unemployment benefits 13 times in 6 years, but they are unwilling to actually do anything to treat the causes of unemployment and to help hurting workers get the jobs they are looking for.

In fact, Democrats' record on job creation has been pretty dismal.

There was the stimulus bill, which completely failed to bring about the economic growth the President promised.

There are thousands of new regulations the administration has placed on businesses which stifle job creation.

The backdoor national energy tax which the EPA is trying to put on power companies in this country is going to be passed on. People across this country who can least afford it are going to be looking at much higher utility bills.

We have the Keystone Pipeline, which has generated open hostility from Members on the other side, and of course we know that has immediate job creation potential. The Keystone Pipeline, according to the President's own State Department, would create 22,000 shovel-ready jobs, which could become available as soon as we get the pipeline approved.

Of course, there is the ObamaCare legislation, passed several years ago, which continues to wreak havoc on job creation in this country. Chief among the burdens ObamaCare places on business is the employer mandate, which requires all businesses with 50 or more full-time workers, which the administration defines as 30 hours or more a week, to provide government-approved health insurance or to pay a fine.

That is financially impossible for thousands of nonprofits and businesses with small profit margins such as restaurants. As a result, many of these businesses are being forced to cut workers' hours below 30 hours a week to reduce the number of full-time employees on their books. And when they hire new workers, they are hiring part-time—not full-time—employees.

The employer mandate is also discouraging a lot of small businesses from hiring at all. Businesses that planned to expand are now deciding they will be safer financially if they keep their businesses below 50 employ-

ees. As a result, many new jobs are simply not being created.

Then there is the costly tax on life-saving medical devices such as pacemakers and insulin pumps. This ObamaCare tax, which is so economically damaging that it is opposed by many Democrats as well as Republicans, has already affected more than 300,000 jobs in the medical device industry. If the tax is not repealed soon, many more jobs in the industry will be lost entirely or sent overseas.

Ultimately, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that ObamaCare will result in up to 2.5 million fewer full-time workers. On top of that, the Budget Committee estimates the law will reduce wages by more than \$1 trillion.

Right now more than 10 million Americans are unemployed. Nearly 4 million of them have been unemployed for more than 6 months. Perpetually extending unemployment benefits does not fix that problem. We need to start creating jobs.

I have an amendment to the legislation before us. It is called the Solutions to Long-Term Unemployment Act. It includes four commonsense measures that would support the unemployed and make it easier and cheaper for employers to hire new workers.

For starters, my amendment would provide direct support to unemployed workers by offering a one-time, low-interest loan of up to \$10,000 to allow an individual who has been out of work for 6 months or longer to relocate to a city or State that has a lower unemployment rate.

Unemployment rates vary substantially across the United States. My home State of South Dakota, for example, has an unemployment rate of 3.6 percent, which is far below the national average. We have a hard time in my State of South Dakota, believe it or not, in actually finding workers to fill the jobs. I talk to employers all the time in my State who are trying to find people to fill the jobs that are available in South Dakota.

So moving to a State with a low unemployment rate can substantially increase workers' chances of getting a job. Unfortunately, most long-term unemployed Americans lack the means to pack up and move to a new city or State.

My amendment would help ensure that lack of resources does not prevent Americans from heading out to where the jobs are.

My amendment also would support workers by cleaning up the mess that is Federal worker training programs. Currently, there are more than 50—50—worker training programs spread across nine different Federal bureaucracies. Needless to say, that leads to a lot of duplication. And worse, a majority of these programs have never been evaluated to see if they actually work.

My amendment would consolidate 35 of these programs into one streamlined