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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BRIAN SCHATZ, a Senator from the State of Hawaii.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, creator of the universe, create hearts within our Senators that will make them strong enough to know when they are weak. Give them sufficient bravery to choose the more difficult right. Lord, inspire them to be gracious in defeat and humble in victory. Give them enough integrity to face themselves when they are afraid, as they remember that perfect love destroys trepidations. Teach them, O God, how to stand up in the storm with complete confidence in the ultimate triumph of truth.

We pray in Your majestic Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 9, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BRIAN SCHATZ, a Sen-

ator from the State of Hawaii, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SCHATZ thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in a period of morning business with the time until noon divided equally. The Republicans will control the first 30 minutes, and the majority will control the second 30 minutes.

At noon, all post-cloture time on the motion to proceed to S. 1845, the unemployment insurance extension, will expire and the Senate will begin consideration of the bill. Senators will be notified when votes are scheduled.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Mr. REID. Another day has passed and we still have a vast majority of Republicans standing in the way of the extension of unemployment benefits.

Some Republican Senators are having conversations about possible offsets for a full-year extension. I have said a number of times I think we would be ill-advised to have another short-term extension. If we are going to have an extension that they are talking about paying for, let's do it for 1 year. We don't need to come back and worry about this in 3 more months.

Let's see how they wish to pay for this. We have heard proposals. The proposals are, one, to stop people having health care. The other is to go after children, the earned-income tax credit

for American boys and girls. It doesn't sound like a very good idea to me.

Then we have a number of proposals suggested by another Senator late last night that, if we look at it, it is not worth \$5 billion. It is worth much less than that. To do what has been suggested by one Republican Senator would be to devastate the disabled, and that wouldn't be appropriate.

I would be interested if there are other proposals. As I have indicated on a number of occasions, I continue to say offsetting the cost of emergency unemployment benefits is not something I agree with.

President Bush extended emergency unemployment insurance five times. Not one of these five times was there a whimper from my Republican colleagues or certainly Democratic Senators that it should be paid for. It wasn't right to offset the cost when President Bush was President, and it is not right to offset the cost now that President Obama is in the White House.

We have cut the deficit in half since President Obama took office, and overall debt reduction has been even more transparent, almost \$3 trillion. While we must keep up our good work, we have more to do. We must solve the Nation's job crisis if we ever hope to solve fiscal problems.

Today's long-term unemployment rate is more than double what it was at any time Congress let emergency job assistance expire. Since many Republican Senators are insisting that the cost be offset, I am pleased to talk, as we all are on this side of the aisle, about a long-term emergency extension of unemployment benefits. I repeat, I am waiting to hear from my Republican colleagues about how to pay for this extension.

It has been a week since families already hanging by a thread were kicked off of unemployment insurance benefits. Think about this. People who have been out of work for month after

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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S189

month learned at the beginning of this year they wouldn't get \$300 a week.

Remember, this is not charity. First, they have to lose their job, through no fault of their own. Then they have to go out every week, look for a job, and have to list where they have gone.

For every job that is available in America today, there are three people looking for that job. I was stunned when I had my news briefing this morning when one Republican Senator said: There are so many jobs that are unfilled in America today. Let these people go get those jobs. Try that one on for size.

For many the benefits were the only thing preventing them from descending into poverty or even becoming homeless. Hundreds of thousands of children, as a result of these benefits, have been stopped from going into the rolls of the poor.

These families can't wait any longer for relief. I am optimistic my Republican colleagues will help us find a way out of this, and put people first and partisanship second.

Tuesday, House Republican leaders were forced to send a message to their Members reminding them these people are out of work, be compassionate. Then, of course, the memo came to the Senate.

Can one imagine having to remind Senators about having compassion for people who have been long-term unemployed?

Yesterday afternoon the Republican leader spoke in this Chamber for a long time, 45 minutes. Not once during this discussion were the words "jobs," "the economy" or "unemployment" mentioned—not once.

Middle-class Americans are hurting. We know the rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and the middle class is being squeezed.

During the last 30 years, the middle class has lost 10 percent of the earnings they had in the previous 30 years, whereas the top 1 percent during that same 30-year period had their income and wealth triple.

These people who are struggling out there are working two jobs. Some are even trying to do it with three jobs, and some of it is part-time, just in an effort to get by. The rest have watched their wages shrink at the same time, as I have indicated, as the richest of the rich are doing much, much better.

What beleaguered Americans need is not a memo on basic decency, as Republicans got on Tuesday, or a bitter diatribe about the rules of the Senate; they need solutions. For 1.3 million Americans today and 5 million Americans over the course of this year, extending emergency unemployment benefits is a solution.

Raising the minimum wage so a mother or father working two jobs can afford the rent and an electric bill in the same month is a solution. Investing in job creation and education so the workers of today can compete for the jobs of tomorrow is a solution.

Whenever my Republican colleagues are prepared to stop complaining and start working with Democrats to create solutions, we will be here waiting.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Before my friend, the Republican leader, makes his remarks, I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business be extended until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each; further, that the Senate recess from 12:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.; finally, that the previous order with respect to the motion to proceed to S. 1845 be modified so all postcloture time on the motion to proceed be considered to be expired at 2:15 p.m., rather than the earlier time I mentioned.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. For months the Democrats who run Washington have been desperate to distract from the pain of ObamaCare. If we listen to them, they think they have found something that might work for them.

The one thing that can actually distract folks from the misery of this law is the misery of the economic malaise they have presided over for the past 5 years. We truly have to hand it to them in one respect. It takes a lot of chutzpah to spend an entire Presidential term pushing policies that are supposedly meant to help the little guy and then turn around and blame everybody else when they flop.

But chutzpah won't solve the problem, and the poll-tested talking points and failed stimulus ideas we have seen Democrats trot out thus far won't do much to improve the plight of millions of Americans struggling in today's economy.

To me that is the real tragedy, because the discussion about how to help Americans battle against the odds day after day is a conversation we actually should be having. In fact, it is a debate Republicans are having. In recent days we have seen several leading Republicans talk about how to tackle poverty in the 21st century.

Unlike the Democrats' outdated ideas from the sixties, Republicans are thinking about ways to update our Nation's approach with fresh proposals that speak to the situation Americans actually find themselves in today, not back in the sixties.

The Republican approach is to learn from past mistakes. It is about turning the left's good intentions into policies that can actually get the job done, and

it is about moving beyond the treatment of symptoms and getting at the underlying problems.

That is the thinking behind the Economic Freedom Zones Act, which Senator PAUL and I recently introduced. It aims to shine a light into some of the most impoverished corners of our country, to raise up cities and families who have been left behind and sometimes literally crushed by the outdated ideas from the sixties and to actually do that in a way that lasts.

With this legislation, some of the most disadvantaged areas of our country would acquire the ability to apply for economic freedom zone status that would help lift the burden of some of the poorest families in our country. Small business owners would see fewer government regulations, enabling them to create jobs and drive prosperity. Entrepreneurs would see punitive tax barriers peeled back, allowing them to lead a recovery with new ideas and new energy. Failed educational systems would see reforms that lift up disadvantaged children, giving new hope to a younger generation. Cities and regions that now face a dark future could transform themselves, if they chose, almost instantly into magnets for new ideas and for new hope.

If our Democratic colleagues are serious about their focus on economic distress—if it is more than only some poll-tested ObamaCare distraction—then I would invite them to work with us on innovative new approaches such as this.

This could allow the Senate, for instance, to consider our proposal as an amendment to the unemployment insurance legislation currently on the floor, because this is a discussion that needs to be about helping people. These economic freedom zones are similar in some ways to the Promise Zone initiative recently developed by the Obama administration.

I was pleased to hear that eight counties in eastern Kentucky will soon receive Promise Zone designation. That is why I wrote in support of granting this designation last year, because there is no doubt that eastern Kentucky is a region that has suffered enormous hardship in recent years—much of it, unfortunately, related to the very same Obama administration war on coal families. But the promise zone designation is a step in the right direction nonetheless. Senator PAUL and I will be heading to the White House later today for a promise zone event because we are encouraged the President is finally—finally—focused on a concrete approach to jobs that Members of both parties can support, proving that we can accomplish things when we focus on real efforts rather than political show votes that are designed to fail.

Promise zones are something we can build on with far more comprehensive approaches, such as Senator PAUL's economic freedom zones that would reach even more communities in need