

program and move control to the States. With every State facing different unemployment challenges, trying to administer a one-size-fits-all program from Washington makes absolutely no sense. Putting States in control would allow each State to tailor its workforce training programs to the needs of its own citizens.

My amendment would also provide two incentives to encourage businesses to hire the long-term unemployed.

First, my amendment would permanently exempt long-term unemployed workers from ObamaCare's requirement that businesses with 50 or more workers provide government-approved health care to their employees or pay a fine.

Many employers want to hire more workers but they are afraid. They are afraid of the financial hit their businesses will take if they end up subject to ObamaCare's costly mandate. My amendment would allow businesses to hire those new workers without that fear.

This idea recently gained broad bipartisan support in the House of Representatives. The House has acted on a similar measure to exempt veterans from the ObamaCare employer mandate headcount. That measure passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 406 to 1. That is a strong indication that we need to provide relief from ObamaCare's costly mandates to ensure those who need and want to work are able to find good jobs.

I am confident that if the majority leader would allow this provision to get a vote on the Senate floor, we would see a similar outcome that would benefit long-term unemployed individuals.

Finally, my amendment would provide another hiring incentive by granting a 6-month payroll tax holiday for each long-term unemployed worker that a business hires. For an employer hiring a worker that is making \$40,000, that 6-month payroll holiday means a savings of \$1,240.

If it is the Senate's will to extend these benefits, Republicans want to ensure this extension is paired with the kind of help that will actually ensure we do not have to extend unemployment benefits a 14th or a 15th time. That is why we are here offering measures to address the root cause of unemployment—the lack of jobs.

It is vital that we stop putting bandaids over the problem and start focusing on solutions. Democrats may not have made job creation a priority for the last 5 years, but they can start making it a priority today. And they can do that by the majority leader allowing votes on Republican proposals to make it easier and less expensive to create jobs.

We just heard—we keep hearing—proposals that are being brought to the floor by Democrats that will drive up the cost of doing business, make it harder, create more obstacles to hiring people and to creating jobs. The proposed 40-percent increase in the min-

imum wage, for example—I have visited with employers in my State of South Dakota, small employers. I had a meeting with employers, where the size of their businesses range from 30 employees up to about 200 employees, all of whom concluded that an increase of that magnitude in the minimum wage would make it much harder for them to grow their businesses and to create jobs.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated that raising the minimum wage would cost our economy up to 1 million jobs. Why? Because it makes it more expensive, more difficult for employers to create those jobs and to hire new workers. As a consequence, there are fewer jobs that get created in our economy.

Well, if the goal is to lift people into the middle class, to get more people to work, I do not know why we would look at policies that have proven in the past to make it more difficult to create jobs and cost us jobs in our economy. And we have the Congressional Budget Office saying it would cost us up to 1 million jobs and also raise costs for people in this country; in other words, the things people have to buy. It would raise prices for the things people have to rely on in their daily lives.

Those are the types of things we continue to hear from the other side—proposals that, frankly, sound good and maybe poll well but when you really get down to brass tacks do not get the job done. And clearly, the object is creating jobs—something we have not done here now for 5 years because we consistently get policies from our Democratic colleagues and from the President that drive up the cost of doing business, drive up the cost of hiring new employees, put more obstacles in the way of job creation, instead of putting policies in place that we know—that we know—will create jobs, good-paying jobs, and give people an opportunity for advancement that will help lift them into the middle class.

We can do it. It is high time we did it. I hope, again, that the majority leader will allow votes this week on Republican proposals—and there are many of them here—that actually will make it easier and less expensive to create jobs in this country. It is long past time that we start providing real help for the unemployed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The Senator from Indiana.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT EXTENSION

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I would like to discuss the legislation currently under consideration. But I want to begin by briefly discussing how we arrived at this point.

In January, I was one of a few on our side of the aisle who voted to begin debate on the bill to extend unemployment insurance benefits. I said at the time—and I still believe today—that the Senate should have a full and open

debate on this important issue, a debate that includes consideration of modifications and changes to the program.

The President, after all, said the program needs reforms. This is an opportunity to implement those reforms.

Members on both sides of the aisle—Republicans and Democrats—have acknowledged the need for reforms. So my vote to consider this legislation early on, when it came up, was not about supporting or opposing an extension of the emergency unemployment insurance program, but it was about initiating a debate on this important topic and setting the stage for both sides to work together to find a credible way of paying for this extension, if it was granted, and having responsible reforms in terms of amending or changing the current law so we could avoid some of the duplication and some of the misuse of funds that go into this particular program.

So those two things—a responsible pay-for and measures to reform the program—were critical. I felt that was the debate we needed and, in fact, we did have a bipartisan discussion back and forth with the caucus on our side of the aisle and the caucus on the other side.

It is clear that we have gotten to the point where not all of us are happy with the result that came forward. I see my colleague from Nevada Senator HELLER on the floor. No one could have been a better leader in terms of pulling the group together, working to find a sensible solution to this issue. I commend him for the efforts he has made.

However, I am disappointed in not having the ability to offer amendments when a bill comes to the floor, and being shut down by the majority leader who simply says: I am going to use Senate procedures—some of them arcane procedures—to deny the opposing party any opportunity to include their ideas, their thoughts, their amendments in the process.

Throughout the discussion we have had with our colleagues across the aisle in trying to form a consensus and bring the bill forward, some of us were disappointed that those items that we offered, that we thought were reasonable, were not included in the final version.

You do not always get everything you want. But nevertheless, at least around here you used to be able to go down to the floor and say: I want to give my colleagues a shot at hearing what my amendment tries to accomplish, and allow it a vote. And if you win, you win; if you lose, you lose. In the end, you look at the total package, as amended—or at least as attempted to be amended—and make a decision: Do I want to support this or not support this?

That is the position we were in, and I had what I thought were two reasonable requests. One was prohibiting the simultaneous collection of Social Security disability insurance and receiving unemployment insurance.

Look, the law is basic and it is common sense. If you are eligible to receive unemployment benefits, you have to be determined as someone capable of performing suitable work. I had an amendment to incorporate this proposal into the language of the final bill that is going to come before us. The amendment language is identical to the language previously proposed by Senate Democrats that would offset Social Security disability benefits by the amount of unemployment insurance received.

So, as I said, by law, a person has to be able to work to qualify for unemployment benefits. Yet, as we have found, some people claiming those benefits also are claiming Social Security disability benefits. The law provides that in order to claim disability payments, you have to prove that you are not capable of working, that there are basic medical reasons why you cannot work.

But here we have, documented by agencies of the government, people who are getting checks for both programs. All we were trying to do—all I am trying to do is put forth a provision that says you cannot do both; you either are able to work or you are not able to work. If you are not able to work, you can qualify for disability payments. But if you are able to work, you may qualify for unemployment benefits if there is no work available, but you should not be able to qualify for both.

While some adjustments have been made, there still are several billions of dollars of costs to the taxpayers because of this duplication.

Secondly, I offered a provision that gave the States the flexibility to make decisions as to how people would qualify for these benefits. I hear frustration from employers all across Indiana that are basically being told by people who are looking for work: I would rather keep collecting unemployment than accept the job you are offering to me.

In this time of slow economic growth, as we come out of the recession very slowly, some people, as has been documented to me by many employers across the State of Indiana, are basically saying people would rather collect the benefits.

So we put in what was called a suitability provision that would prohibit individuals from receiving emergency unemployment compensation if they fail to accept any offer of suitable work. That is defined as work within their capabilities or suitable work referred to them by the State employment agency. Unfortunately I thought we had bipartisan support. Instead they said let's study this. It has been studied. It has been documented. We do not need to study. "Study" is a way for—let's take this decision out of the process and it will put it down some dark, deep hole and maybe some study will come out later on.

So the bottom line is that the two amendments I had hoped would be part of this final package have not been in-

corporated. What I am asking for, what I have been asking for now, is the opportunity to bring those two proposals forward, debate it on this floor, call for a vote. I am not going to filibuster it. I am not going to delay it. I am not going to throw a monkey wrench into the process. Let's have a time-limited, straightforward debate and give Members the opportunity to vote their yes or vote their no.

Then, at the end, when this process has been worked through, as the Senate was designed to do but under the leadership of the current majority leader has not been able to do, once again—once again—the very function, the design of the Senate has been thwarted by the leadership or lack of leadership of the majority leader who simply said: I will use procedural measures to keep you from offering any amendment to this bill.

I do appreciate the work that went on behind the scenes to try to come up with a consensus bill. I think that fell short of where I would like to go. I would at least like to have the opportunity as a Senator to offer on the floor an amendment to the bill and then accept the results, yea or nay.

Since both of these things that I have mentioned have had bipartisan support, why are we not allowed to vote for it or against it. Why are we not allowed to have the opportunity to do what the Senate is supposed to do on behalf of the constituents whom we all represent? That was the basis for my decision to go forward with this. A lot of people misunderstood that, but it was simply a decision I made that we ought to return to some form of regular order.

The reason we come to the Senate is to be able to be a participant in fashioning legislation. Our majority leader Senator REID has disallowed that opportunity, meaning essentially robbing the soul of the Senate, the purpose of the Senate, the purpose of Senators, turning us into robots, rubberstamping whatever the majority leader wants us to pass or not pass, telling us that the 200-and-some years of tradition, of debate and vote in the Senate, the ability to offer an amendment has been denied us.

Once again here we are back in the same situation because we have one individual who has made a decision that the minority does not count, that Senators—even some in the majority—do not count. They do not get to offer amendments either. We are going to do it his way and not the way it has been done for more than 200 years.

With that in mind, having the ability to bring forward something that I think has bipartisan support, is responsible, will address the reforms the President called for has been once again denied. With that, I simply cannot support going forward with this, even though there are people out there who are legitimately looking for work, making every possible effort, should be able to qualify for an unemployment

program. But the most basic of reforms that ought to be debated and voted on—we ought to have the courage to put our yes or our no to it so people back home know where we stand—that has been denied us yet once again.

This is a dysfunctional body, led by a dysfunctional leader. It is not operating as the Constitution has put forth, as the tradition of the Senate has required. It is a shame. It is a shame on us that we are not even allowing debate and the opportunity to offer reforms, even when they have bipartisan support.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, I wish to begin by thanking the two previous speakers for their comments and their dedication to their particular cause. My friend from Indiana knows both of his amendments are something I would have supported if given the opportunity to actually vote on them, but the important point is this, we are moving forward. The Senate is moving forward with a debate on a bipartisan proposal to responsibly extend unemployment benefits. I am encouraged by our progress so far. I hope we can continue to work with our colleagues to pass this piece of legislation.

In speaking on this bill, I would be remiss not to again thank my friend from Rhode Island for his tireless efforts to help unemployed Americans by temporarily extending unemployment insurance benefits. I admire his dedication. I am greatly pleased we are here today to support a bipartisan effort and to help all Americans keep American families on their feet in a very difficult economic climate.

I also wish to thank Senators COLLINS, PORTMAN, MURKOWSKI, and KIRK for their continued willingness to come to the table to craft a bill that would garner enough support to pass in the Senate. I also, as I just mentioned, wish to acknowledge the contributions of both Senator COATS and Senator AYOTTE, who though not cosponsors of this particular version of the bill have been essential in these negotiations, as well as Senator ISAKSON and Senator HOEVEN, who have also been engaged in this matter in recent months.

Last December the Federal unemployment insurance benefits were allowed to expire, leaving millions of job-seeking Americans wondering how they would cover their mortgage, pay the utilities, fill their car with gas, put food on the table for their families. My constituents who have written to me, who have called my office, and the people I have spoken with when I am home in Nevada have shared many heart-breaking stories with me.

I have heard from individuals all across the spectrum, from every sector, from every industry. I would like to share one of those letters from Michael in Carson City, NV, who wrote to me several weeks ago. After Michael and his friend moved to Nevada from California just a few years ago, they needed

unemployment insurance benefits to help them bridge the gap between jobs. Sometimes they had to visit the local food pantry to keep food on their table, but Michael kept looking for a job.

Eventually he found some work as a substitute teacher. He also found another part-time job working nights and even weekends. Through perseverance, Michael ended up finding a full-time job, and now he and his wife and their young daughter are enjoying some financial stability that they did not have just a few years ago.

I think Michael's story is a great example of how valuable unemployment insurance is to American families who have fallen on some hard times. I thank Michael for taking the time to share that story with me. I am very glad his family is doing well in Carson City.

I have another letter from John from Henderson. John lost his job last April. He has been looking for work for nearly 1 year now. Unemployment insurance has helped him keep a roof over his head. It also helped him keep the power on. John is doing everything he can to make ends meet while he continues to search for a job, but it is getting tougher and tougher to put food on the table and provide for his young family.

Without any help, John and his family may lose their home. They are worried about where to go and they are worried about what options they have left. I have a stack of letters just like these, Nevadans sharing their individual experiences with me. Those stories are why I am here today and I have fought so hard to find a way to temporarily extend these benefits in a responsible way.

These are real American families trying to make ends meet. They are people who want to get back to work, want to be self-sufficient, want to provide for their families. Without unemployment insurance, many of them would have lost their homes, been forced to search and seek out additional government services. Unemployment insurance helps people before things go from bad to worse and does make a difference for millions of Americans.

Last week I spoke briefly on the need to extend these benefits. I want to reiterate an important point that I think is often misunderstood. Unemployment insurance benefits go to unemployed individuals who are actively seeking employment. I share the desire of my colleagues and constituents to rein in out-of-control Federal spending and reduce the dependence on Federal aid, but I believe unemployment insurance is a critical safety net for American families, especially during periods of high unemployment such as we are currently experiencing.

Further, additional benefit tiers are only available to States that meet certain unemployment rate thresholds, meaning that the duration of benefits decreases as the State recovers. This ensures that job seekers in the hardest

hit States have access to critical resources when they need it the most. Nowhere is this more apparent and important than in my home State of Nevada, which has the unfortunate distinction of carrying the Nation's highest unemployment rate for nearly 5 years—nearly 14 percent unemployment at the highest.

Nevada's current unemployment rate at 8.5 percent remains still one of the highest in the country, high above the national average and far from where we need to be as a State. What concerns me even more is the fact that thousands of Nevadans have dropped out of the workforce entirely, people who lost their jobs, exhausted both their State and Federal unemployment insurance benefits and were still unable to find work in this tough economy.

Nevada is now trending in the right direction, thanks in large part to the vision of our Governor, Governor Sandoval. But again, we still have a long way to go. That is why we need to temporarily extend unemployment insurance benefits to give the people of Nevada, Rhode Island, and many other States some financial certainty as our country's economy recovers.

As we continue to push forward to restore our economy, the need for these benefits will naturally diminish. This brings me to another important point I wish to highlight about this bill. There is a temporary extension of unemployment insurance benefits, 5 months to be exact. Temporary extensions of these programs during high periods of unemployment have found bipartisan support in the past. I think they merit bipartisan support. I agree we should not indefinitely extend these programs. I would also like to see additional reforms. We should continue that discussion.

I strongly agree with my colleagues on this side of the aisle that the key to our economic recovery is through the creation of new jobs. Under this administration, there are still three workers for every available job, leaving far too many qualified workers out of a job simply because there are not enough opportunities available.

My Republican colleagues, including Senators HOEVEN, THUNE, LEE, and many others, have introduced more than a dozen bills to spur job creation by reducing governmental burdens and making it easier for businesses to grow and create new jobs—bills that will help reduce the need for unemployment insurance benefits, strengthen our economy, and improve the financial security of millions of Americans.

I hope that as we are debating this bill before us today, we have the opportunity to debate and vote on these important job creation measures.

I know there are some questions regarding how State workforce agencies might administer retroactive benefits and enforce some of the new requirements provided in this bill. These concerns are not unreasonable. However, I firmly believe that not only can Con-

gress work with States to overcome any of these challenges, but Congress has the responsibility to overcome these challenges. No bill is perfect, and the varying capabilities of State systems compound the difficulty of the task at hand.

This isn't a new obstacle for Congress. Every person in this Chamber is familiar with the challenges involved in finding a balance between Federal and State laws and ensuring that what we do in Washington isn't an undue burden back home. We deal with that problem every single day. Additionally, the Department of Labor has provided \$345 million to States over the past 5 years to help States modernize their systems so that they are more responsive and efficient.

I know we can find a way to work with our State agencies to find a way to reduce the burden of administering these benefits. In fact, Department of Labor Secretary Thomas Perez wrote a letter last week in response to some of these very concerns and believes that the challenges are not—I repeat, are not—insurmountable. As a former labor secretary for Maryland and now Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor, Mr. Perez has hands-on experience with unemployment insurance at both the Federal and State levels. In his letter, Secretary Perez indicated that the Department of Labor already has guidance on how to administer retroactive benefits. This is not the first time there has been a gap in UI extensions. Although this gap may be a little longer than usual, Secretary Perez states that “we are confident that we could successfully address this challenge again.”

It may also be difficult to implement measures in our UI systems to determine whether someone is a millionaire, but I think most of us would agree that jobless millionaires and billionaires should not be receiving unemployment benefits. The limited resources we have to provide for this social safety net ought to be reserved for Americans who need this help the most. Some State systems may not be responsive or responsible enough to get this done by the time these benefits expire again. I recognize that. But if we continue to provide a series of short-term extensions without any reforms, we will never fix the underlying issues. We have known for years that there are some well-off individuals abusing the UI system, and it is long past time that we do something about it.

We should not be content to just extend Federal programs if we know there are inefficiencies. We need to do something to make these programs run more efficiently, effectively, and ensure that our hard-earned taxpayer dollars are used in a responsible fashion.

I am proud to have worked with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle on this legislation. It hasn't always been easy, but I thank my colleagues for their patience and their continued hard work to help the American people find

some stability as they look to get back to work. I look forward to moving to this bill, passing it, and working with the House to restore unemployment insurance benefits as we continue working to improve the health of the American economy.

I yield the floor, and 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. HELLER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. HELLER. I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until the Senate recesses at 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. HELLER. 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. HATCH. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. HATCH. I ask unanimous consent that after the completion of my remarks, the distinguished Senator from Kansas then be able to give his remarks.

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

#### UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Extension Act of 2014. In my view, this legislation is flawed in many respects, and that being the case, I intend to vote against it.

First and foremost, it needs to be said that the fact that we are even having a debate about extending unemployment benefits is unfortunate. Throughout the Obama administration, our Nation has been plagued with lackluster job growth, lower and lower rates of labor force participation, and high levels of long-term unemployment. Indeed, under this President it has been harder to find a job than at any other point in our Nation's recent history.

But, as has been said before, these are just symptoms of a much larger

problem. The plight of the long-term unemployed—which this bill is supposed to address—is not the major problem facing America today. Instead, the major problem is that despite the best efforts of many of us in Congress, our government hasn't done enough to foster economic growth. In fact, more often than not in recent years government has stood in the way. It has been an impediment.

We are now more than 5 years into this administration, and it is becoming increasingly clear that President Obama does not have a plan to address these problems. True enough, he has proposals that would expand the government and redistribute income but nothing resembling a plan to promote growth in the private sector or to actually put people back to work. Many of the President's redistribution schemes end up costing labor supply and jobs, as the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has made clear with respect to ObamaCare and the President's proposed minimum wage hike.

Growth is what we should be debating, ideas and proposals that would actually grow our economy and help people find jobs. But instead we are here once again to debate an extension of the emergency unemployment compensation program, or EUC.

Let's talk about the EUC program for just a few minutes.

The proponents of this legislation have told us that extending "temporary" unemployment benefits is vital to our economy, but I think the facts tell a much different story. Between July 2008 when the program started and December 2013 when it expired, we spent roughly \$265 billion on EUC benefits. That is more than a quarter of a trillion dollars on a temporary Federal benefit program. For much of that time the program paid up to 73 weeks of Federal benefits, amounting to a record total of 99 available weeks of unemployment benefits when you add the State and Federal benefits together. All told, we have paid EUC benefits for 66 months, which is 2½ years longer than any similar emergency unemployment program in U.S. history.

In other words, EUC is a program with a long track record, and when we look at the record, we see that it hasn't had the positive economic impact proponents of the program often claim it has. Indeed, despite the hundreds of billions of dollars in benefits we have already paid under this program, we have suffered through the worst jobs recovery in our Nation's history, and the long-term unemployed have suffered the most.

There is evidence to suggest this program has actually made the recovery worse. For example, according to recent research published by the National Bureau of Economic Research, "unemployment benefit extensions can account for most of the persistently high unemployment after the Great Recession."

So while some Democrats have claimed that extending unemployment benefits is the best way to create jobs, the facts certainly tell a different story.

I am not going to condemn anyone for wanting to extend a helping hand to those who continue to face difficulties under the Obama economy, but if we are going to debate yet another extension of Federal unemployment benefits, we should at the very least get our facts straight.

So with all this in mind—the cost of the EUC program and the questionable benefits—let's take a look at the legislation before us now.

One thing I would like to point out is that with this legislation we have once again abandoned regular order and bypassed the committee process entirely. I have remarked on this problem here on the floor several times before. When we ignore the traditional role of the Senate committees, we short-circuit the legislative process, and more often than not we end up with an inferior product. This bill is certainly no exception.

We learned this last month when the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, NASWA, sent a letter to the Senate outlining its concern with this bill. Chief among these concerns was that it would be extremely difficult for States to retroactively pay unemployment insurance claims, as this bill would require. Indeed, according to NASWA, backdating EUC claims "would make it nearly impossible" to apply individual State work search requirements, which is a key factor in determining eligibility for unemployment insurance. In addition, the letter indicated that there would likely be a large increase in new EUC overpayments as a result of this retroactivity requirement.

Due to these concerns and others, NASWA concluded that it would take States up to 3 months to implement this legislation, which is problematic because although the bill before us is technically for a 5-month extension, only 2 months of benefits would be paid prospectively. In other words, many States would not be ready to implement this legislation by the time it expires.

This is more than a glitch or a bump in the road; it is State workforce agencies—the very people who will have to implement this legislation on a day-to-day basis—telling the Senate that this bill is unworkable. According to the NASWA letter, there are a number of States that would consider not participating in the program due to these problems and the short time available to address them.

Labor Secretary Perez sent his own letter in response to NASWA's statement, promising to help States address these concerns. Oddly enough, however, this letter was very short on actual details as to how that assistance would be offered.