

raise the minimum wage. If we do those three things, Equal Pay Day will not be today, it will be December 31 for everybody.

#### 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I see the time has come to recess for the caucuses, but I just wish to say that today is another important day. Today is the 150th anniversary of the date that Abraham Lincoln signed the law authorizing the institution we now know as Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. That was 150 years ago today. What began on April 8, 1864, as a school with just eight students has flourished into the world's first and only institution of higher education dedicated to deaf and hard-of-hearing students, renowned internationally for its outstanding academic programs and also for its leading research into the history, language, and culture of deaf people.

I take pride in the fact that it was Senator James W. Grimes of Iowa, then-chair of the Committee on the District of Columbia, who initiated that legislation allowing the school to confer degrees. Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, who is now the current distinguished president of Gallaudet, was born and raised in Sioux City, IA, not too far from the Presiding Officer's State of North Dakota. In fact, Dr. Hurwitz's father and my brother were classmates at the Iowa School for the Deaf. We are proud of the many Iowa students, including a recent intern in my office, Joseph Lewis, who are graduates of Gallaudet.

It is a wonderful school. If you have never been there, you ought to go and take a look at it. They do fantastic work at Gallaudet, attracting people from all around the globe to go there. In 1894 it was named after Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, and then in 1986 it was conferred university status by the Congress. Again, 150 years ago today, on April 8, 1864, Abraham Lincoln signed it into law.

In 1864, the school was known as the Columbia Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb and Blind. It was inspired by the work of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, who had traveled to Paris to study the successful work of French educators who pioneered the use of a manual communication method of instructing the deaf—in other words, sign language. In 1894, the name of the institution was changed to Gallaudet College in honor of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet. In 1986, by act of Congress, the college was granted university status.

My brother Frank was deaf from an early age. During his childhood, in the 1940s and 1950s, most Americans had very backward, ignorant attitudes toward deaf people. It pained me to witness the brazen discrimination and prejudice that he faced on a daily basis and I promised that if I ever got into a

position of power, I would change things to prevent that kind of discrimination in the future.

As it turned out, I did rise to a position of power. I was determined to make good on my promise to pass legislation to end discrimination against people with disabilities, and an unexpected event gave a huge impetus to my legislative ambition.

In 1988, Gallaudet University was hiring a new president. At that time, the school had never had a deaf president. There were three candidates: one was deaf and two were hearing. The Board of Visitors selected a hearing president.

To the students at Gallaudet, who believed passionately that the time had come for a deaf president, this was unacceptable. They rose up in a movement that came to be known as Deaf President Now. They organized protests. They boycotted classes. Some 2,000 Gallaudet students marched from their campus to the U.S. Capitol Building. They demanded a president at Gallaudet who could relate to them in a way that no hearing person could.

I had the privilege of speaking to them. I told them, "You are my heroes." They are still my heroes because they kept up their protests until they won. Gallaudet got its first deaf president, I. King Jordan.

But that is not all those students won. The protests by the students at Gallaudet struck a chord with other people with disabilities all across America. Those students were like a spark that ignited a brushfire.

They rose up and said: Enough. No more second-class citizenship. No more discrimination. And other people with disabilities took up the same rallying cry.

As the chief Senate sponsor of the Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA, there is no question in my mind that the students' successful protests at Gallaudet were one of the key reasons why we were able to pass the ADA 2 years later.

Today, Gallaudet University is a diverse, bilingual university dedicated to the intellectual and professional advancement of deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals through American Sign Language and English. I have always been an admirer and supporter of Gallaudet. I respect it as a place that opens doors and creates opportunity. At Gallaudet, the focus is on ability, not disability, and, as with all schools, sometimes it is on extraordinary ability, such as Adham Talaat, the academic all-American defensive end who helped to lead the Gallaudet football team to a 9 and 1 record this past season or faculty member Dr. Laura-Ann Pettito and her Visual Language and Visual Learning Center, where she and her graduate students map the brain to better understand how we decode auditory and visual language or 2011 graduate James Caverly, who starred in the play "Tribes" about a hearing family with a deaf son.

Gallaudet aims not only to educate but also to empower, and this is an incredibly important gift to give to the men and women who attend Gallaudet. I join with my colleagues in the Senate in saluting this remarkable institution on its 150th anniversary.

I yield the floor.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:35 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT— MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 3:15 p.m. will be controlled by the majority.

The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I rise today to speak on paycheck fairness, the bill we will be voting on tomorrow in the Senate. During the next hour 11 Democratic women will be coming to the floor to speak. I am not going to introduce each one. We want to get right to the issue. Rather than talking flowery talk about each other, we want to talk about the need for paycheck fairness.

I ask unanimous consent that each Senator be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes.

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. I am the leadoff speaker. I want to be very clear on why we are on the Senate floor. We believe women need a fair shot to get equal pay for equal work. We want the same pay for the same job. We want it in our lawbooks, and we want it in our checkbooks. We want to finish the job we began with Lilly Ledbetter 5 years ago.

Five years ago, one of the first bills that we passed in the Obama administration was the Lilly Ledbetter bill. We reopened the courthouse doors to women who wanted to seek redress for the way they were treated unequally in the workplace. But we need to finish the job. That is what paycheck fairness does.

What does "finish the job" mean? Well, right now in the United States of America, there is a veil of secrecy—a veil of secrecy. Where is it? In the workplace. Right now, in companies and businesses, employees are forbidden to talk about the pay they receive with another employee. In many places, when an employee seeks redress, she is retaliated against. Last but not at all least, there are loopholes

that many employers use to justify women being paid less. They invent excuses, and they call them business necessity explanations. Well, we are on the floor today to say we want to end the soft bigotry of low wages for women. Equal pay for equal work. No secrecy. No retaliation. No loopholes. No way. Today is the day for equal pay.

We are on the floor today because it is Equal Pay Day. What does that mean? It means the women of the United States of America have to work in many instances 15 months to earn what a man doing the same job, with the same experience and the same seniority, earns in 1 year.

Now, we are not against the guys. There are many men who do jobs they hate so their daughters can have the jobs they love. After working to ensure that they have a good home and a good education, they see their daughters are paid less.

We all know there is a generalized wage suppression going on in the middle class—another topic and another debate. But right now we are on the job and we want to be paid for what we do. It is hard to believe that women are almost half of the workforce and yet during that time, as we make up 50 percent of the workforce, we still make only 77 cents for every dollar a man makes; African-American women earn 62 cents; Latino women 54 cents—almost half. This is a disgrace.

We need to change the law. That is what we seek to do by bringing up the Paycheck Fairness Act. Our President has tried to do his part. He supported the Lilly Ledbetter bill. Today we were at the White House, where he took an Executive order step to ban retaliation against employees who work for Federal contractors. So we are going to start being a model employer by banning retaliation not only within the Federal Government but with our Federal contractors. He also then called upon the contractors to submit data, information, so that we would know what are the gender differences that are going on on the very contracts we have.

When we signed the Equal Pay Act—it was in 1963 under Lyndon Johnson—women made only 59 cents. You know what. That was 50 years ago. In 50 years we have gained 18 cents. Well, that is not the way to go. The way to go is to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act. What we want to do is make sure that, as I said, there is no retaliation, no excuses.

We hear this all the time: Oh, the guys do harder jobs; they are the breadwinners. But so are many women now who are heading households or who are single breadwinners.

The other important thing is that no longer will women be limited in pay to just backpay when they have been discriminated against.

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. My time is up. I am so into this bill. I have been at this leg-

islation for a long time. But what I have now is hope. Help is on the way. Reinforcements are here.

Now I turn to Senator ELIZABETH WARREN and then Senator CLAIRE MCCASKILL and Senator CANTWELL, in that order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, I thank Senator MIKULSKI for her incredible leadership on this issue.

I come to the floor today in support of equal pay for equal work. I honestly cannot believe we are still arguing over equal pay in 2014. Congress first moved to solve this problem more than 50 years ago when the Equal Pay Act was signed into law.

In 1963 women were earning 59 cents on the dollar for every dollar earned by a man. Today women earn only 77 cents on the dollar compared to what a man earns.

Women are taking a hit in nearly every occupation. Bloomberg analyzed census data and found that median earnings for women were lower than those for men in 264 out of 265 major occupational categories. In 99.6 percent of all occupations, men get paid more than women—99.6 percent. That is not an accident; that is discrimination.

The effects of this discrimination are real and they are long lasting. Women, for example, borrow roughly the same amount of money as men to pay for college, but according to the American Association of University Women, these women make only 82 cents on the dollar compared with men 1 year after graduating. So women take out the same loans to go to college, but they face an even steeper road to repay those loans.

Unequal pay also means a tougher retirement. The average woman in Massachusetts who collects Social Security will receive about \$3,000 less each year than a similarly situated man because the benefits are tied to how much people earn while they are working.

This is a problem—a big problem—and women are fed up. Fifty years and a woman still cannot earn the same as a man for doing the same work. Women are ready to fix it, but it is not easy.

Today some women can be fired just for asking the guy across the hall how much money he makes. Earlier today the President issued Executive orders to stop Federal contractors from retaliating against women who ask about their pay and to instruct the Department of Labor to collect better data for the gender pay gap. Good for him, and good for women working for contractors. Now the Congress should extend these protections to all women.

The Senate will soon vote on the Paycheck Fairness Act. This is a commonsense proposal: No discrimination and no retaliation when women ask how much the guys are getting paid. We will get basic data to tell us how much men and women are getting paid for key jobs.

So there it is. It is basic protection, basic information—a fair shot. That is essentially what this bill does.

Sure, sometimes men are paid more than women. Employers can pay different salaries based on factors such as skill, performance, expertise, seniority, and so forth. The Paycheck Fairness Act does not touch any of that. It simply provides the tools that women need to make sure salary differences have something to do with the actual job they are doing and not just the fact that they are women.

Several States have already adopted similar rules. Businesses in these States continue to thrive without any explosion of lawsuits. This bill is about good business, a level playing field for men and women, an equal chance to get the job done, a fair shot for all of us.

America's women are tired of hearing that pay inequality is not real. We are tired of hearing that somehow it is our fault. We are ready to fight back against pay discrimination.

I thank Senator MIKULSKI and all of my colleagues who are speaking on the floor today for their leadership on this important proposal. I urge the Senate to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act to strengthen America's middle-class families and to level the playing field for hard-working women.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Madam President, every once in a while it is probably healthy for all of us to sit back for a moment and reflect on why we are here. What is the Senate supposed to be about? Why do we come to the Senate? Why did our Founding Fathers lay out a Constitution that had these branches of government?

In the branch of government in which we reside, we are called the legislative branch. So what is that about? I think what the Founding Fathers wanted us to do is to make our laws reflect the values and priorities of the American people.

The Paycheck Fairness Act is a simple step toward making our laws reflect two of the most important values we have in the United States of America.

I guarantee you that if you walked up to any of my colleagues who intend to vote against this and said, do you believe in equality and justice, they would say, of course we believe in equality and justice.

Then why would you not support this legislation, because it is just that simple. We are just trying to make the laws of this country reflect the American ideals of equality and justice.

Well, they say, there are laws on the books.

Well, here is the deal. You cannot get justice if you do not have the facts. If the facts are a secret, a protected secret, then justice is always going to be elusive and equality is going to be something to which we give lip service,

not something we will truly enjoy in this country.

So this is just a step to say to American business: Let's understand why two people doing the same job have two different levels of pay. Explain it to us.

What is so evil about that? What is so evil about expecting a business to be able to explain why a man and a woman with the same experience, the same credentials, and the same work output are paid differently. If there is a good reason, then there is no litigation, there is no rush to the courthouse. But if there is not a good reason, that is where that justice comes in. That is where a woman has an opportunity to go into the hallowed halls of our courts—the envy of the world, I might add—to have a fair shot at justice.

The notion that someone can be fired for trying to get the facts about their own compensation, the notion that retaliation would somehow be embraced by my colleagues who do not intend to vote for this legislation I do not understand. I know they are trying to explain to the American people that this has something to do with us having a love affair with America's trial lawyers. I have never heard more rubbish in my life. It is not the trial lawyers whom we care about. It is the women. It is the single moms.

It is the women who have this sinking feeling in the pit of their stomach that they are getting paid less, that they are helpless because they can't get at the information. When they do, they have the entire burden of proof of showing that somehow they weren't inferior to their male colleagues.

There is absolutely no possible reason that any of us would be trying to help lawyers with this. It is their clients, guys; it is the women of America. It is the women of America who want the laws to reflect our values, equality, and justice. This is a simple step. It is nothing to be afraid of.

Frankly, the only thing anyone who opposes this bill should be afraid of is the wrath of American women across this country who are sick and tired of being told it is none of their business what their colleague is getting paid and: By the way, I don't have to explain to you why you make less even though your work output has been superior to your male colleagues. It is time and it is about our values.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. I join my colleagues and thank the Senator from Missouri for her statement as somebody who has been involved in basically making sure the law is implemented and upheld too. I appreciate her views.

I thank Senator MIKULSKI for her leadership in advocating for equal pay for equal work. She has been a champion for many years and she is insistent now that we pass this legislation, and that is why we are here, because

we want our colleagues to understand how important it is to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act.

I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this legislation and end the discrimination many women face in America. This is a critical issue, not only for women but for men because, obviously, the households of America deserve to have both people making equal pay.

The message from the American people is clear: They want Congress to focus on the most important economic issues of the day; that is, jobs. And certainly having a job that pays you equally for the work you do with your coworkers is critically important.

The Paycheck Fairness Act is exactly what we should be working on, ways to strengthen the pocketbooks of many Americans.

While we have made progress over the past five decades since we passed the Equal Pay Act, we still have a long way to go. In my State, the State of Washington, women are paid 78 cents for every \$1 that men earn for the same work. That amounts to an average wage gap of \$11,000 per year. The truth is that many women are the breadwinners in their family, and they should be paid as breadwinners. They should not face discrimination.

Today women make up 48 percent of the workforce in the State of Washington, and these families are very important to our economy. On average, mothers in Washington provide 41 percent of their household income, and nationally 40 percent of women are the sole primary breadwinners for their households. This is an important issue for our economy. Think of the boost they would get, the boost we would see if they were paid equally.

Right now one-third of those families headed by women in Washington live in poverty, so closing the wage gap means they would be able to afford 82 more weeks of food, according to the National Partnership for Women & Families. It would mean better economic freedom, it would mean the ability to buy more essentials, and it means their families would be better off.

But, more importantly, people need to realize that not only does this pay gap affect women's ability to support their family, the pay gap also reduces their ability to save for the future. From around the age of 35 through retirement, women are typically paid about 75 to 80 percent what men are paid, and over their lifetime a woman in Washington will earn \$500,000 less than her male counterpart. That is money that can be saved and invested for the future. So we must pass the Paycheck Fairness Act to end this disparity because this act will require employers to provide justification other than gender for paying men higher wages than women for the exact same job. It protects employees who share that information with others from being retaliated against, and it provides victims of pay discrimination

with the same remedies available to victims of other discrimination, including punitive and compensation damages.

This is important legislation. It is important legislation that will end the discrimination women are seeing in the workplace.

The Paycheck Fairness Act will also help eliminate the pay gap to help these families who are struggling in our economy. But just in case people get the wrong idea, I want to make sure people are clear. Even in fields such as engineering and computer science, women earn, on average, only 75 percent of what their male counterparts earn. A woman with a master's degree will only make 70 cents for every \$1 of her equally educated male counterparts.

It is time the Senate end the pay discrimination by passing the Paycheck Fairness Act. That is why I have been happy to sponsor this legislation and work with my colleagues. I want young women growing up today to know this is not an issue they are going to have to deal with in the future. They will get equal pay.

I thank my colleagues. I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will help us in invoking cloture and providing the votes we need to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. I am proud to join this fight for paycheck fairness, an effort led by the dean of the women in the Senate, the first Democratic woman ever elected to the Senate in her own right, and the longest serving woman in Congress today—Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI.

This is the same fight many of our own mothers and grandmothers fought, equal pay for equal work. The promise made by the Equal Pay Act 50 years ago, literally half a century ago, continues to be broken every single day in this country.

When that happens, it doesn't just hold back women individually, it holds back entire families. It holds back the entire American economy.

Today women make up more than half of America's population and nearly half the workforce. Women are outearning men in college degrees and advanced degrees and a growing share of primary household earners. But to this day men are still outearning women for the exact same work. On average, women earn 77 cents for every \$1 a man earns and even less for women of color. African-American women earn 69 cents on the dollar and Latinas earn just 58 cents on the dollar.

In the years leading to the Equal Pay Act, only about 11 percent of families relied on women as the primary wage earner for kids under 18—just 11 percent. Today 40 percent of primary or sole wage earners are women: 40 percent of families with kids under 18 who rely on women to pay the bills, balance

the family finances, make the tough choices around the kitchen table, and provide for their kids.

But you would not know this by looking at America's workplace policies. They are stuck in the past. They are stuck in the "Mad Men" era. Congress and State capitols have simply failed to keep up with the pace of the new economy and the face of the modern American workplace.

This has to change. How can two-income families and sole female-bread-winning households get ahead when they are shortchanged every single month? If we want a growing economy and a thriving middle class, pay women fairly. It is that simple. When women earn equal pay, America's GDP could grow by up to 4 percent. It is common sense, and it is the right thing to do to strengthen our economy and to strengthen our families.

So today, on Equal Pay Day, let's get this done. Let's pass the Paycheck Fairness Act and give America's women the fair shot they deserve to earn their way ahead in today's economy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I rise to speak about the importance of closing the pay gap for women. I am a cosponsor of the Paycheck Fairness Act—an important bill—and I am so honored to be here with my colleagues and the leader of the women in the Senate, Senator MIKULSKI.

Today is Equal Pay Day, but it also marks the week where things are finally warming up in my State after a long deep-freeze. We look as though we are going to have 70 degrees. The snow will melt, the flowers will bloom, and the message we are all here to bring is it is time to stop freezing the women of America out of this economy. The women of America want to be treated fairly.

Now all the work we are doing—whether it is the minimum wage bill or the unemployment compensation—is stuck somewhere in a deep freezer over in the House of Representatives, somewhere between the frozen peas and the chocolate ice cream, and it is time to thaw out the freezer in Washington, DC, and help the women of America. That is what this bill is about, that is what the minimum wage bill is about. People deserve a fair shot at the American dream.

I thank again Senator MIKULSKI and I thank her for her leadership in the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. In 2009 we passed that bill to make sure that workers who face pay discrimination based on gender, race, age, religion, disability, or national origin have access to the courts. In doing so, we restored the original intent of the Civil Rights Act and the Equal Pay Act. Now it is time to prevent that pay discrimination from happening in the first place.

We all know women have made great strides in this economy. We have made

great strides in this body. We now have 20 women in the Senate but, of course, we are still only at 20 percent. The Fortune 500 now has 23 women CEOs, but I still think anyone who looks at this knows there are great strides that have been made but great progress ahead.

Despite all this progress, women in this country still only earn close to 80 cents for every \$1 made by men. This pay gap has real consequences for American families. Two-thirds of today's families rely on a mother's income either in part or in entirety, and in more than one-third of families the mother is the main breadwinner.

As Senate chair of the Joint Economic Committee, we released a report this week that shows lower wages impact women all through their working lives. I think that is something people don't always think about, the fact that if women consistently make less money, and then you retire, and you are actually going to live longer than men, you have a lot less money to retire with in the first place.

In fact, women who retire have about \$11,000 less per year than men. That is very significant when you look at the age range where women will be in retirement.

The other piece we don't always think about—unless you are in their position—is women in the sandwich generation, women who are taking care of aging parents at the same time they are taking care of children. That is happening every single day in this country as women are having to take leave from work or leave their job to take care of an aging parent while they are still struggling to afford to send their kids to college, to send their kids to daycare.

This legislation will build on the promises of the Equal Pay Act and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. It will give women new tools and protections to guard against pay discrimination and will help reaffirm that basic principle that all women deserve equal pay for equal work.

I am hopeful we can get this done for the people of this country. It was the late Senator Paul Wellstone of Minnesota who said: "We all do better when we all do better." I still believe that is true, and so do my colleagues who join me today.

We need to focus on this bill. We need to unfreeze some old beliefs, and we need to bring a little Spring into the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, Senator MIKULSKI and I were just whispering to each other about how far we have come since the day Anita Hill came to the Hill and we couldn't do much to help her, but we organized and recognized that women had to be here in numbers sufficient to make a difference and clearly, today, we are.

My colleague Senator MIKULSKI is our dean of the women. All she is basi-

cally saying, with all of us as an echo chamber, is this: Women deserve a fair shot. It is long past time for us to stop shortchanging half of the country and their families.

I want to show us a chart that looks at what happens to a woman in a year when she gives up \$11,000 because she is not being paid, for the same job, the same amount a man is. What could that \$11,000 do?

She could buy a year of groceries, she could provide a year of rent, a year of daycare, she could buy a used car, and she could afford community college. That is 1 year. Look at what happens over the course of a lifetime when because a woman is not getting her fair share, the equal amount that she deserves, she is only getting 77 cents on the dollar. It is \$443,000. What could she do with that? Pay off her entire mortgage, send three kids to the University of California—a great school, I might say—and buy 8,000 tanks of gas.

What is the point of all of this? It is to show that the dollars women are not getting could be going into the community, could be making sure their families are taken care of, and would make all the difference in the world. Now, I was a little startled to see some of my Republican friends on the other side—Republican Members of the House—say this is demeaning to women. That is what I got out of a news report—that women don't need this. Would they have said that about children? Did children need protection against child labor? The answer is yes. Did workers need protection from a 14-hour day when they were being exploited? Yes. Did we need to make sure people in hazardous workplaces, such as chemical companies, have appropriate protective gear? Yes. Did we need to make sure there are fire exits in a crowded factory, after we saw a horrific fire called the Triangle fire? Yes. Now we need to make sure that women get equal pay for equal work.

This is just part of the continuum of bending that arc of history toward justice. That is what is happening here under the leadership of Senator MIKULSKI and all of us who stand on her shoulders. I have to say it is a great day. It is a great day to hear my colleagues come to the floor and speak as one. We are speaking not only for the women of America, who make up more than half, but for their families.

That is the point. Two-thirds of women are either the sole head of household or they share in providing for the economic well-being of their families. This is a matter of justice. It is a matter of fairness. It is a matter of a fair shot. I am proud to stand with my colleagues.

I hope and pray we will get the 60 votes necessary. There is a filibuster going on, as usual. We need a supermajority. But I would say to my colleagues on the other side that too many women have to be super women. So give them a supermajority. They are super women who are holding down

not one job but two jobs. So please help us. Let's celebrate tomorrow with a great vote.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I want to start by expressing my deep thanks and appreciation to Senator MIKULSKI for her tremendous leadership in the fight for equal pay and for bringing the Paycheck Fairness Act to the forefront of the debate this session.

The role of women in our families and in our economy has really shifted dramatically over the last few decades. Today 60 percent of families rely on earnings from both parents. That is up from 37 percent in 1975—60 percent. Women today make up nearly half the workforce, and more than ever women are likely to be the primary breadwinner in their families. Women are making a difference in our economy, in board rooms, lecture halls and small businesses.

But despite the important progress we have made since the Equal Pay Act passed now 50 years ago, including passing the Lilly Ledbetter Act in 2009—thanks again to Senator MIKULSKI—giving women more tools to fight against pay discrimination, women's wages have not caught up with the times. Across the country today women still earn 77 cents on the dollar, on average, to do the exact same work as men. It would take a typical woman until today to earn what a man would earn doing the same work in 2013.

That difference really adds up. In Seattle, in my home State, last year women earned 73 cents on the dollar—73 cents on the dollar—compared to their male counterparts. That translated to a yearly gap of \$16,346. Nationwide, over a typical woman's lifetime, pay discrimination amounts to \$464,320 in lost wages. That is not only unfair to women, it is bad for our families, and it is bad for our economy.

At a time when more and more families rely on women's wages to put food on the table or stay in their homes or build a nest egg for retirement or help pay for their children's education, it is absolutely critical we do more to eliminate pay discrimination and unfairness in the workplace. The Paycheck Fairness Act would tackle pay discrimination head on. It would ramp up enforcement of equal pay laws and strengthen assistance to businesses to improve equal pay practices. I hope we can all agree that 21st century workers should be compensated based on how they do their job, not whether they are male or female.

I hope to be able to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act as quickly as possible for working women and their families in this country, but we can't stop there. We need to build then on these critical reforms with other steps toward giving women a better and a fairer shot at getting ahead. One out of four women in the United States today would benefit from raising the min-

imum wage. That is 15 million American women who are making the equivalent of about 2 gallons of gas per hour. It is clearly time to raise the minimum wage and give working women in the country some much deserved relief.

There are other ways we can, and should be, updating our policies to help working women and their families make ends meet. For example, thanks to our outdated Tax Code, a woman who is thinking about reentering the workforce as the second earner in her family is likely going to face higher tax rates than her husband. That would come in addition to increased costs that she would then have with child care and transportation and the possibility of losing tax credits and other benefits as her household income rises. All of this means struggling families will experience higher tax rates than what many of the wealthiest Americans pay. This can discourage a potential second earner, such as a mom who is talking about reentering the workforce and returning to her professional career.

I recently introduced the 21st Century Worker Tax Cut Act, which would help solve this problem by giving struggling two-earner families with children a tax deduction on the second earner's income. The Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that change alone would cut taxes by an average of \$700 for 7.3 million families next year.

The 21st Century Worker Tax Cut Act would also expand the EITC for childless workers and lower the eligibility age so that people without dependents and young workers just starting out can benefit from the credit.

By the way, this has bipartisan support. It builds on work incentives from the EITC and is paid for by getting rid of wasteful corporate tax loopholes that both Ways and Means Chairman CAMP and Democrats agree ought to be closed.

Opinion leaders from across the political spectrum have said this bill would provide much-needed relief to workers and families. One conservative commentator wrote in the National Review that the 21st Century Worker Tax Cut Act is "a serious proposal that has the potential to better the lives of a large number of workers." A New York Times editorial columnist says it would be "a huge benefit to low-income childless families and two-earner families."

So I am hopeful that here in Congress we will see similar support on both sides of the aisle for a bill that would help women and working families keep more of what they earn.

We have come a long way in terms of the opportunities women have in our country today, but there is no question we have a lot more work to do. If we take these steps I have talked about, and that others here are talking about, we will do much to break down the very real barriers that still exist today. We will help working women and their families, we will strengthen our econ-

omy, and we will expand opportunity for the next generation of women who enter the workforce.

So I am here today to urge my colleagues to support the Paycheck Fairness Act and then build on that step by continuing to help level the playing field for American women and their families.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, this isn't only a women's fight, though we reserved this time. There are many good men in the Senate who will stand shoulder to shoulder with us, and I know the Senator from West Virginia would like to have 2 minutes before he presides. I yield him 2 minutes. Actually, I should yield him 77 percent of what we got, but he is for equal pay and so gets equal time as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. That would be 1 minute and 45 seconds, I say to the Chairwoman.

I thank the chairwoman for what she does and how well she has been leading this charge for all of us. As a proud husband of a brilliant and talented woman, my wife Gayle, and as the father of two daughters and the grandfather of six granddaughters, all of whom are gifted and make great contributions to our country, I believe it is past time women earn the same amount as men in the workplace. We need to correct this unfairness to make sure women are paid what they deserve.

As we join together today to celebrate Equal Pay Day in the year 2014, it just defies common sense that working women in West Virginia earn only 70—not 77 but 70—cents to every dollar a man makes. Too many families are working too hard to make ends meet, and especially in families where women are the breadwinners.

In West Virginia there are more than 81,000 family households headed by women. About 36 percent of those families, or nearly 29,200 family households, have incomes that fall below the poverty level. Eliminating the wage gap would provide much needed income to women whose wages put food on the table, pay the bills, and maintain a respectable quality of life for their children and families.

Growing up I was blessed to be raised by two strong, hardworking women—my grandmother, affectionately known as Mama Kay, and my mother. By example, both of these wonderful ladies taught me that women can work just as hard, if not harder, with more responsibilities, and they should get paid the same as a man. As a matter of fact, they probably should get overtime. There is no reason why they shouldn't have received the same pay for the same job as men, and that certainly resonates today.

Since I joined the Senate, I have been proud to have cosponsored the Paycheck Fairness Act. The very first vote

I took in the Senate was for paycheck fairness. Until Congress passes this truly commonsense bill, I will continue to fight for paycheck fairness because the bottom line is people should earn the same pay for the same work, period, no excuses.

As a former governor, most of my decisionmaking was made around good strong women who sat down and gave me the facts and nothing but the facts, and I appreciated that.

It shouldn't matter whether you are a man or a woman. You should be treated fairly no matter what, no matter where you are or what you do.

I thank our chairman, and I yield the floor.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Senator HEITKAMP.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Thank you so much. I want to thank our great friend and great leader from the State of Maryland for continuing her hard work. I wonder if she ever wakes up in the morning and wonders when it is ever going to be done. When are we going to see justice? I am sure she has learned over the years that until you stand up every day and live a life where you are trying to make positive change in America, it doesn't get done. She is somebody who has never given up.

It is interesting that North Dakota, as West Virginia, is one of those States where women earn less than men, and below the national average less than men. When we look at the national average and 77 percent, that is a horrible statistic. But what is really horrible is if you live that statistic.

Not one person in this body lives that statistic. We are all treated equally. It doesn't matter what gender we are. If we are Members of Congress, we are treated equally. Imagine the outpouring of sympathy and support if we got 77 percent of a male's salary. We would think that was atrocious. We would think how could that possibly happen in America. But it happens every day in America.

It happens every day for working women who are supporting their families, women who go to work 40, 50 or 60 hours to support their families and to improve the economies of their State. And they keep spinning their wheels. They keep working at trying to change this and don't seem to get any further ahead. How many of us could take a 25-percent reduction in salary? That is really what we are asking every woman in America to do—not across the board but certainly on average—asking every woman in America to take a 25-percent reduction in her salary. That is not fair, and it should not be the facts of 2014. It should not be the way things are.

There has been a lot of discussion around the opportunities for women, and obviously we have grown. You cannot see 20 women in the Senate and not think that we are making some progress. But we have to think not only about women in professional occu-

pations but women who are school cooks and janitors, such as my mother. The women who are working every day at the diner to put food on their family's table and food on the tables of their patrons.

So when we are talking about this, I must also mention the need for an increase in the minimum wage, which is a topic for further discussion on the floor. I would like to remind my fellow Senators that the current minimum wage, which is overrepresented by women in terms of the number of people earning minimum wage, is less than 9 percent of a congressional salary. We have people in this body who think that the salary they receive is inadequate, but we expect people to work 40 hours a week for the minimum wage. Even if you had two minimum wage jobs—think about it—working 40 hours a week on two of those minimum wage jobs, you still would make less than \$32,000 a year working 80 hours a week. That is the story of many women in this country.

When we were growing up and women were in the workforce, it used to be they were working for that extra income. There was this excuse given over and over: She is just supplementing the income, and the man is the breadwinner. She is earning a little extra so she can buy a refrigerator or whatever it is.

That is not the reality of today. The reality of today is that more women are the primary or the sole breadwinners for their family. We have to correct this problem.

I have listened to the debate on the other side saying there are other ideas on how to do this. This won't promote or give a way forward for change. These are the same people who think if you just maintain the status quo, somehow things will magically change in the Senate. After 20 or 30 or 40 years of this struggle, what would suggest to us that we are going to get parity if we don't take some pretty proactive action here in the Senate and in the Congress to say that what a woman does is valuable and it is at least as valuable as what a man does in the exact same job. That is who we are in this country. We are gender neutral, and that is what we are trying to do. We are trying to maintain gender neutrality, maintain a good economy because we know if we put more money into women's family budgets, that money is going to go out and grow our economy even more.

The bottom line is this. Let's have a little sympathy in this body for people who earn less than 20 percent of what a Senator earns. Let's give them a show of support, a thank you from a grateful country for the hard work they put in every day. Let's tell them that the words in the Constitution and the promise of equality are still not realized, but we can work together to make that a reality in their lives.

Thank you. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I would like to start by thanking Senator MIKULSKI for organizing us today and much more importantly for her leadership over the years on this issue. We are so proud to have her as our dean.

I come to the floor today on Equal Pay Day to stand and speak about an issue that impacts women and families in every State across this country. Today I rise to give voice to the belief that we need to be working together across party aisles to build an America where hard work is rewarded and where there is a fair shot for everyone to realize their pursuits and dreams.

In America today the growing gap between rich and everyone else is at its largest point in 100 years. The absence of upward mobility for hard-working families demands action because if we cannot close this gap we might someday talk about the middle class as something we used to have, not something that each generation can aspire to.

As I have traveled through my home State of Wisconsin, they have told me that the powerful and well connected seem to get to write their own rules while the concerns and struggles of middle-class families often go unnoticed here in Washington. They feel as if our economic system is tilted towards those at the top and that our political system exists to protect unfair advantages, instead of making sure that everybody gets a fair shot.

I rise to give voice to the fact that there is paycheck inequality for hard-working American women across this country and that it is time we do something about it. Working women make up over 50 percent of our workforce, and they are working harder than ever to get ahead. And they deserve to get ahead. Many are working full time, and many are working two jobs to make ends meet. Yet far too many are barely getting by, and far too many women and children are living in poverty. The least we can do is level the playing field and give women a fair shot at getting ahead because they deserve equal pay for equal work. It is simply unfair that women are paid on average 77 cents for every dollar paid to a man. This reality is holding women back, and it is holding our entire economy back.

I am proud to join my colleagues today to deliver a call for action to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act and give women equal pay for equal work. This legislation will help close the paycheck gap for women, it will help create upward mobility for women, and it will help strengthen the economic security of millions of families across our country.

Let me take the time to tell you just one story of one woman. Shannon is a single mother of three from Two Rivers, WI. Shannon is working hard to



support her family, but the pay gap is holding her back. Shannon has continued her education to advance her career as an interpreter in a school, but she faces the grim reality that women teachers are often paid less than their male counterparts.

In fact—and this is so hard to believe—statistics collected by our Department of Labor make it clear that women earn less than men in almost all occupations commonly held by women. Passing the Paycheck Fairness Act will help close the pay gap and provide Shannon and so many others with financial freedom for their families.

It would help Shannon manage issues that working moms face every single day—unexpected car problems, children outgrowing their pants and shoes, the anxiety of not being able to save a little bit from their paycheck to someday send their children to college. To put this in the simplest terms possible, it would give Shannon a fair shot at passing on a stronger future for her children.

Today women working full time in Wisconsin go home with \$10,324 less a year than their male counterparts. In Wisconsin, 31 percent of households headed by working women have incomes that fall below the poverty level. This is simply wrong, and it is our job to work together to change that. Millions of American women get up everyday to work hard for that middle-class dream: a good job that pays the bills, health care coverage you can rely on, a home you can call your own, a chance to save for your kids' college education, and a secure retirement. But instead, gender discrimination is holding women and their families back. Eliminating the pay gap will make families more secure.

Nearly 60 percent of women would earn more if women were paid the same as men of the same experience with similar education and hours of work. The poverty rate for women would be cut in half. It is wrong for us to ignore the gap between the economic security that American women work so hard to achieve and the economic uncertainty that they are asked to settle for. With a record number of women in the workforce today, the right thing to do is to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act and empower women with a fair shot at equal pay.

I urge my colleagues to join me in working to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act because it would strengthen families and our economy by providing working women with the tools they need to close the gender pay gap. It will show the American people our commitment to working together to provide a fair shot for everyone.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the Paycheck Fairness Act. I would like to first commend the senior Senator from Maryland for her fearless

and tireless leadership on this issue. She has been a protean force when it comes to this issue and many others. I deeply admire and respect her.

This week I held my annual roundtable with the Women's Fund in Providence. We talked about equal rights, equal pay, and economic opportunity and justice with women who are creating jobs and fighting inequality everyday.

Today, as my colleagues have pointed out, we mark Equal Pay Day. Women would have to work until April 8 of this year just to earn what men did as of December 31 of last year. Passing the Paycheck Fairness Act will move us one step closer to being able to commemorate Equal Pay Day on December 31 each year for both men and women, and that is what we should be striving for.

This year we are marking the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act and the war on poverty. We have come a long way, but our efforts to form a more perfect, more equal union must continue forward. When President Kennedy signed the Equal Pay Act into law in 1963, women were earning an average of 59 cents on the dollar compared to men.

No matter how you slice it, median annual earnings, weekly earnings, by level of education or occupation, there is still a gender gap in pay today.

The Women's Fund of Rhode Island issued a report showing that gender discrimination in pay is even more striking for minority women. In Rhode Island African-American women make 61 cents for every dollar that a white male makes. For Latinas the figure is 51 cents. This gender discrimination pay gap affects women at all educational levels.

According to the Council of Economic Advisers, women are more likely to complete college—that is right. Today women are completing college more than men. In 2012, 25- to 34-year-old women were 21 percent more likely than men to be college graduates, but this is not closing the earnings gap. To all those who say it is all about education, and these people have more education, that is wrong. It is not.

Women who earn advanced degrees start off on a relatively even footing—people with a Master's or a Ph.D. But again, over the course of their careers the wage gap widens in favor of men. The National Partnership for Women and Families reports that women with Master's degrees are paid 70 cents for every dollar paid to men with Master's degrees, and women with Master's degrees earn less than men with Bachelor's degrees.

Equal pay for equal work is not only an issue of equity. It has real economic consequences. Families rely on women's income. Data analyzed by the National Partnership for Women and Families show that women are the primary or sole breadwinners in 40 percent of families. If we eliminate gender discrimination in pay in Rhode Island,

a working woman would have enough extra money to buy 74 more weeks of food for her family, to make 6 more months of mortgage and utilities payments, or to pay 11 more months of rent. That just doesn't help the woman; it helps the family.

One of the best tools in fighting poverty is to close the pay gap. The Paycheck Fairness Act will help fulfill the promise of the Equal Pay Act by improving the remedies available to women facing gender discrimination. These are commonsense and fair improvements for our mothers, our daughters, our sisters, our fathers, our sons, and our brothers.

We must pass the Paycheck Fairness Act. We believe everyone deserves a fair shot, and that includes equal pay for equal work. I urge my colleagues to come together to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, and with that I will yield the floor.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, almost 51 years after the enactment of the Equal Pay Act, women now make up almost half of the workforce; however, gender-based wage discrimination is still pervasive. Statistics show that there is a significant difference in the pay of men and women performing the same or substantially similar jobs, regardless of the education level or type of occupation. Looking at the average pay for women, women get paid about 77 cents for every dollar earned by similar male workers.

The experience of women in the workforce is better in California but not by much. According to the most recent census estimates, in California, the average pay for a woman working full time, year round is \$41,956 per year, while the average for a man is \$50,139. This means that, on average, women in California are paid less than 84 cents for every dollar paid to men. Put another way, this amounts to a yearly gap of \$8,183 between full-time working men and women in the State. Over the course of a career, on average, women stand to lose \$434,000 in income and thus enjoy fewer Social Security, pension, and retirement benefits.

Latina women face greater disparities in the workplace as they are paid approximately 54 cents for every dollar paid to men. Women of color fare similarly.

As a group, full-time working women in California alone lose over \$37.5 billion each year due to the wage gap.

According to the National Partnership for Women and Families, if the gender-based "pay gap" were eliminated, a working woman in California would have enough money for approximately 59 more weeks of food, 4 more months of mortgage and utilities payments, 7 more months of rent, or 2,103 additional gallons of gas.

A Redondo Beach resident wrote to me, "I know that at my current age, I have been paid hundreds of thousands of dollars less than my colleagues, though I am also paying my rent . . .

supporting my kids, and trying to figure out how I can possibly pay for colleges for them. If I had been earning a fair wage, I could afford college, and healthcare, and would have some retirement savings, all things that I cannot currently do.”

She is absolutely right—it is estimated that it takes a woman 4½ more months of work to earn the same as her male counterpart earns in just 1 year. Yet she still must pay for the same monthly expenses as her male colleagues. In Redondo Beach, her monthly expenses can be crippling.

A single adult with two children living in Redondo Beach spends monthly around \$536 in food, \$767 in child care, \$451 in medical care, \$1,420 in housing, and \$639 in transportation, not to mention taxes. Considering that over 1.7 million households in California are headed by women, over 500,000 of whom fall below the poverty level as it is, denying California women equal pay for equal work adds to their burden and affects their families.

This is not just a problem for low-income women and families. The pay gap exists across the spectrum of education levels and occupations. According to the 2012 S&P 500 CEO Pay Study, although companies run by female chief executive officers performed better on average than those run by men—looking at the total shareholder return for their companies—those female CEOs were paid an average of about \$500,000 less per year than their male CEO counterparts. And the pay gap is wider for women with higher education, making it more difficult for them to pay off their school loans.

Congress tried to address the problem by passing the Equal Pay Act in 1963, which amended the Fair Labor Standards Act, making it illegal for employers to pay unequal wages to men and women who perform substantially the same work. However, as is reflected in wage data statistics and in the stories shared by women across the country, while the Equal Pay Act was a step in the right direction, more needs to be done to clarify the law.

Congress recently had to correct the courts on how to interpret pay discrimination laws in line with their original intent by passing the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009. Through Lilly Ledbetter, Congress amended title VII of the Civil Rights Act to clarify the timeframes in which employees could bring a claim against employers who engage in pay discrimination.

But according to recent studies, Congress needs to strengthen the law further in order to effectively close the pay gap between men and women across the spectrum. The disparity in pay between men and women is the same as it was in 2002. If we keep going at this rate, without congressional action, women will not reach pay equity until 2058.

The Paycheck Fairness Act therefore provides Congress with an opportunity

to eliminate this unfair pay gap. It will reasonably update the Equal Pay Act by eliminating loopholes used for far too long in courtrooms; strengthening incentives to employers to prevent pay discrimination through remedies available under current law to victims of race-based and national origin discrimination; improving wage data collection so that we can better evaluate the pay gap; and by strengthening education, training, outreach, and enforcement efforts to close the pay gap.

This bill also importantly provides that employers are prohibited from retaliating against employees who share salary information with their coworkers. Nearly half of all workers in the United States are strongly discouraged or even have workplace policies against the sharing of salary information. This secrecy makes it extremely difficult for employees to detect pay discrimination and contributes to the pay gap. For example, Lilly Ledbetter was paid less than her male coworkers for almost 20 years but did not realize it because a company policy prohibited her from discussing her pay with her coworkers. She discovered the pay discrimination only when someone sent her an anonymous note.

Under the Paycheck Fairness Act, employees would therefore generally be protected from retaliation when they discuss or inquire about their wages or the wages of another employee. They would also be protected from retaliation if they make a charge, file a complaint, or participate in a government or employer-initiated investigation. These antiretaliation provisions would generally not protect employees such as payroll or HR personnel who have access to wage information as an essential function of their job. Rather, the antiretaliation provisions would enable employees to learn about their employers' wage practices without being afraid of losing their jobs. With such information, employees will be better suited to close the gender pay gap for themselves and others.

I recognize the concerns of business owners who maintain that amending the Equal Pay Act will open them up to liability and risk harming their business. I have heard concerns that employers fear that this bill will infringe on their private business practices should it become law.

After considering and reconsidering the effects of this legislation with the concerns of business owners in mind and after consulting with experts in employment and labor law, I came to the conclusion that this bill is necessary to level the playing field and does not have to necessarily affect business practices so long as those business practices do not discriminate against women.

As under the current law, employers would not be helpless or defenseless—they can proactively conduct an internal pay-equity analysis to ensure equal pay for equal work before government intervention. In fact, the bill provides

for a 6-month waiting period from the time of enactment, and the Department of Labor would assist small businesses with compliance.

Should a claim arise, employers have affirmative defenses that they can raise to justify pay differences, such as if the wages are set based on a seniority system; a merit system; a system that measures earnings by quantity or quality of product; or a bona fide factor other than sex, such as education, training, or experience, which is job-related and serves a legitimate business interest.

I am not in the habit of supporting bills that advance women just because I am a woman. I am supporting this bill because I believe in advancing equal rights and uplifting millions of families who rely on a woman's paycheck in order to eat.

I am not alone in hearing stories about paycheck disparities in California. My colleagues have heard similar stories from women in their States. We also know that women are critical to driving this economy, and by ensuring equal pay for equal work, the entire economy benefits.

With the knowledge of pervasive inequality still today in pay among men and women and considering that the majority of Americans support the government taking steps to enable women to get equal pay for equal work, it is our duty to vote in favor of cloture and for swift passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I thank the Senator for those comments.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 4:30 p.m., the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar Nos. 556 and 502; that there be 2 minutes for debate equally divided between the two leaders or their designees prior to each vote; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote, with no intervening action or debate, on the nominations in the order listed; further, that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that no further motions be in order to the nominations; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the Record; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for weeks Republicans have been trying to get Democrats to focus on the one issue Americans say they care the most about, and that is jobs and the economy. Everyone agrees we are in the midst of a jobs crisis in our country. Republicans are saying: Here are some concrete things we can actually



do about it. But Democrats have completely shut us out. If government isn't part of the solution or if it doesn't drive a wedge between one group of people and another, they are just not interested.

Here is one idea that I proposed and Democrats have brushed aside: How about helping workers better balance the demands of work and family by allowing them time off as a form of overtime compensation? This is an idea that is tailored to the needs of the modern workforce. It is something a lot of working women say they want, and it is something government employees have already enjoyed for years. What we are saying is to give today's working women in the private sector the same kind of flexibility working women have in the government.

Everybody is familiar with the idea of getting paid time-and-a-half for overtime work. What this bill would do is give people the choice of getting a proportionate bump in time off for overtime work. So if you work an extra hour, you can get an hour-and-a-half off work. This should be a no-brainer. This is a concrete proposal to help men and women adapt to the needs of the modern workplace and for the workplace to adapt to the modern workforce. This is not just a way to help workers, it is a way to especially help working women. Flexibility is a major part of achieving work-life balance, especially for working moms. That is what this amendment is all about.

Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that if cloture is invoked on the motion to proceed to S. 2199, that all postcloture time be yielded back and the Senate proceed to the consideration of the bill and that it be in order for me to offer amendment No. 2962, and then for the majority leader or his designee to offer an amendment, and then it be in order for the leaders or their designees to continue to offer amendments in an alternating fashion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have a unanimous consent request I would like to put forward as well. I ask unanimous consent that if cloture is invoked on the motion to proceed to S. 2199, that all postcloture time be yielded back and the Senate proceed to consideration of the bill, and that it be in order for me to offer amendment No. 2964, and then for the majority leader or his designee to offer an amendment, and it be in order for the leaders or their designees to continue to offer amendments in an alternating fashion with the following amendments on the Republican side in order: McConnell amendment No. 2962, Fischer amendment No. 2963, Alexander amendment No. 2965, and Lee amendment No. 2966.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, would my friend give the subject matter of those three amendments?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Would the Senator from South Dakota state the subject matter of those amendments?

Mr. THUNE. The McConnell amendment has to deal with flexibility in the workplace and comp time, the Fischer amendment has to do with anti-discrimination in the workplace, and I believe the Lee amendment also deals with comp time flexibility in the workplace.

The Senator from Tennessee, Senator ALEXANDER, is here, and I think he can speak to his amendment. Most of them deal with the pending business, S. 2199, which is the Pay Equity Act that the majority leader expects to get a cloture vote on later. We simply ask to have an opportunity to offer amendments that pertain to that bill, on issues we think are important in addressing the issue that is before us.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, is the Alexander amendment, which the Senator from South Dakota suggested, the 350-page amendment that was offered last week?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, if I may respond to the majority leader, the answer is no. The Alexander amendment, I say to my friend from Nevada, is a pretty simple amendment. It talks about giving working parents more flexibility so they can go to soccer games and piano recitals; in other words, to be better parents.

A few years ago Captain Kangaroo, Robert Keeshan, and I—along with some other people—started a company. After our company merged with another company, it became the largest worksite daycare company in America. What we found out was that the greatest value working parents with young children wanted was flexibility. Our fear is that this proposal, which is called paycheck fairness, would actually limit the flexibility of employers can give to working parents so they can go to their children's activities.

My amendment is a very simple amendment. It is only a paragraph or two, and it simply restates the law and makes it clear that if you run a dry cleaner with three people in it, you don't have to hire a lawyer to define a job for an employee with a child in such a way that that employee can go to the piano recital or soccer game. Instead of being about more litigation, it is about giving more flexibility for working parents.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Before my friend from South Dakota leaves the floor, 2964 is the big one?

Mr. THUNE. That is correct.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, I am happy to see a number of Republican colleagues come to the floor. We have been talking about this issue for days now and to discuss, I thought, the subject of equal pay for women. But there has been no talk about equal pay for women. The closest of anything in that regard that has been suggested has been a bill that says if you have to work overtime, then you have a choice of going home or doing the overtime.

The reason we don't have laws like that is because the employer can take advantage of the employee because the employee is at the beck and call of the employer, and I think most labor laws would protect against that now.

I am surprised we have literally heard no one come to the floor except on the one occasion—and I could have missed it—where the Republican Senator made the statement that Senator MIKULSKI's legislation was a trial lawyer's dream. The women who have come to the floor to talk about this—and the men who have come to talk about this today, including the Presiding Officer, and I heard his statement—are simply trying to say we need to be sure this is a fair shot for the middle class, and in this instance it is women. But the Republicans always want to change the subject. Why don't we have a debate on whether women are entitled to have the same pay as men?

The Senate is debating the motion to proceed to the equal pay bill, so the question before the Senate is whether we should even begin debate on this matter. If Senators wish to offer amendments, they would have to begin the debate.

I am always happy to talk about amendments, but the amendment of my friend from South Dakota is nothing that is reasonable. What that amendment does is offer lots of amendments. I think if we look closely at this 350-page amendment, we might even find the kitchen sink in it. It has everything else in it. It is really a perfect example of trying to divert attention from the subject at hand. This is not a serious effort to legislate equal pay for equal work.

My colleague's unanimous consent request would also allow for a potentially unlimited number of amendments. We have been there before, and we know that does not work. Providing an unlimited number of amendments is just another way of saying they want to filibuster the bill, which they have done so artfully over the last 5 years.

My door remains open to further discussions, but I object to the requests that have been made, including the one that I anticipate from my friend from Tennessee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Is there anything pending? I want to make sure there are no pending requests for unanimous consent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. No.

The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I think what we just heard was a number of our Members have amendments they are going to talk about and offer when we get on the bill—and I assume we will at some point—so we can debate and vote on them. We are talking about an issue that is important to people across this country, and we have amendments that we think would improve, strengthen, make better the bill that is going to be on the floor that has been described as the Pay Equity Act by the Democrats.

We actually think there is a better way to do this. We think there is a way that actually would improve the wages, provide better job opportunities, and better opportunities for advancement for women.

This morning the majority leader quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson who said, “America is another name for opportunity.” I could not agree more with that statement. The American dream is to work hard and achieve upward mobility. Americans want good jobs, and they want to earn a fair wage. But the current Obama economy is doing everything it can to hurt the American dream.

The economy is stagnant. There are 10 million Americans who are unemployed—nearly 4 million for 6 months or longer. Household income has fallen. Right now there are 3.7 million more women living in poverty than there were when the President took office. I will repeat that. There are 3.7 million more women living in poverty today than there were when the President took office. The median income for women has dropped by \$733 since President Obama took office. That is why this body should be focused on enacting policies that lift the government-imposed burdens that impede job opportunities and economic growth.

I have offered an amendment—and I just asked unanimous consent to be able to have it debated and voted on when we get on this bill—that actually is focused on enacting policies that lift the government-imposed burdens that impede job opportunities and economic growth. It is called the Good Jobs, Good Wages, and Good Hours Act. It would help return America to a place where there are good job opportunities.

My amendment would help create good-paying jobs by reining in burdensome regulatory requirements, shielding workers from the damaging effects of ObamaCare, approving the Keystone XL Pipeline, and providing permanent tax relief to employers that are looking to expand and hire.

Republicans could not agree more that women should have equal opportunities and pay in the workplace. Unfortunately, the legislation our friends on the other side are pushing will not accomplish that goal. Their legislation would increase Federal regulations that would cut flexibility in the workplace for working moms and end merit pay that rewards quality work.

The Democrats seem to be trying to change the subject of how their ideas

are actually hurting women in the workforce. Of those affected by the Democrats’ ObamaCare 30-hour workweek that is reducing wages, 63 percent are women. So that policy of going to a 30-hour workweek that was defined as such in ObamaCare, 63 percent of the impact of that is being felt by women. Of the roughly 500,000 jobs that CBO projects will be lost by the end of 2016 thanks to the Democrats’ 40-percent minimum wage hike, 235,000 of those—or 57 percent—would be jobs that are held by women. Disproportionately, these policies are going to hurt women.

The poverty rate for women has increased to 16.3 percent from 14.4 percent as of when the President took office. So the poverty rate is higher. We have women who are living in worse economic conditions than when the President took office. If the Democrats were truly serious about fixing that problem—if they are truly serious about helping women—they would work with us on bills to create jobs and to expand workplace opportunities for women and for men as well. That is exactly what my amendment does. It addresses the problems created by ObamaCare, it includes a provision pushed by Senator COLLINS that would restore the 40-hour workweek I mentioned earlier, and it will finally repeal the job-destroying medical device tax for which Senators TOOMEY, HATCH, and COATS have been tirelessly fighting.

My amendment ensures that veterans and the long-term unemployed are not punished by the costs of the ObamaCare employer mandate in that legislation. Senator BLUNT has raised that issue in the Senate on behalf of veterans, and in the House a similar bill passed by a margin of 406 to 1.

My amendment also provides permanent, targeted tax relief to millions of small businesses. Small businesses create 65 percent of all new jobs. Yet this administration has done little more than punish them with more regulations and higher taxes.

The amendment also halts harmful EPA regulations until the EPA conducts additional analysis of the impact those existing rules would have on jobs.

It is time this body recognizes that the policies the other side is advancing are not achieving the outcomes they claim will occur. We need to renew our commitment to helping all Americans, including women, find job opportunities that allow them to achieve the American dream. We need to return this country to a place where America truly is another name for opportunity.

Earlier today the President and CEO of the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council, Karen Kerrigan, wrote an article that says this proposal I am speaking about “offers a set of really good policy proposals to help women entrepreneurs and women in the workforce.”

That is why I sought unanimous consent to have this amendment debated

and voted on, along with many of my colleagues, including the Senator from Nebraska Mrs. FISCHER and the Senator from New Hampshire Ms. AYOTTE, who are here to speak about amendments they want to put forward as a part of this debate. I asked unanimous consent earlier for those amendments to be considered as well and once again that has been blocked by the majority leader. That is the wrong way to deal with an issue of this consequence.

If we want to help people—if we want to create jobs and grow the economy, which ultimately helps lift all the boats, improves the standard of living for middle-class families, women and men—the best way to do that is to get a growing, vibrant economy instead of a stagnant economy, which is what we have today, with too many who have been unemployed for a long period of time.

I hope our colleagues on the other side of the aisle will come to the conclusion that if we are going to debate this issue, we need to debate it in a comprehensive way that takes into consideration all of the ideas out there, including those that will be offered by my colleagues this afternoon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I strongly affirm the principle of equal pay for equal work. Both the Equal Pay Act and title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which were passed on a bipartisan basis, have helped increase career opportunities for women and ensure they receive equal pay for equal work. That is a principle we strongly support.

Women have made progress. They now hold more than half of all managerial and professional jobs—more than double the number of women in 1980—and women comprise a majority in the five fastest growing job fields. According to the Department of Education, women receive 57 percent of all college degrees, 33 percent more than in 1970.

We believe—the reports prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor recognize—that commonly used wage gap statistics don’t tell the full story. Factors including differences in occupation, education, fields of study, type of work, hours worked, and other personal choices shape career paths and they shape earning potential. Moreover, salaries alone don’t account for total compensation. Still, some women continue to struggle with gender-based pay discrimination, directly impacting a woman’s livelihood, financial future, and her job security. With 60 percent of women working as the primary breadwinners, lost wages detrimentally impact families as well as single women.

We fully agree that gender-based pay discrimination in the modern workplace is unacceptable. We just have different ideas from some of our colleagues about the best way to combat this. Prevailing concern among women with wage discrimination indicates

that there is more work to do. That is why I have worked with Senator COLLINS, Senator AYOTTE, and Senator MURKOWSKI to file an amendment to modernize key portions of that 51-year-old Equal Pay Act.

Our proposal prevents retaliation against employees who inquire about, discuss or disclose their salaries. It reinforces current law which prohibits pay discrimination based on gender, and it requires employers to notify the employees of their rights, but we don't stop there because I believe we need a solution that addresses both discrimination and the opportunity gap or the need to provide both men and women with good-paying jobs.

Our amendment consolidates duplicative job training programs and it provides Federal grants to States for the creation of industry-led partnerships. This program is meant to provide to women and men who are underrepresented in industries that report worker shortages with the skills they need to compete. Such industries include manufacturing, energy, transportation, information technology, and health care. Importantly, no new spending is appropriated.

Unfortunately, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are blocking consideration of what I believe is this very commonsense amendment and a number of other Republican amendments that would also help with job creation.

This is nothing more than election year politics. I find it very disappointing. As women and as lawmakers, we believe our proposal to directly address discrimination in the workplace is reasonable, it is fact-based, and it is a great approach. More government and more lawyers will not lead to more pay for women.

Thank you. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, I wish to praise my colleague from Nebraska for her leadership on the important amendment she has just described, the Workplace Advancement Act, which will address legitimate issues to ensure that laws we have had in place for half a century, including the Equal Pay Act and title VII of the Civil Rights Act, are enforced and that women are informed of their rights in the workplace to ensure what we all believe in, which is that women should be paid the same for the same job. Frankly, as a woman, I would like the opportunity to outperform and to be paid more.

One of the concerns I have is about what I view the majority leader meant when he came to the floor and said that this was an important issue to them. If this is such an important issue, why didn't they have a markup in the HELP Committee where everyone could offer their amendments to deal with this legitimate issue that I believe my male and female colleagues feel is important? Why is it that when we have brought legitimate amendments to the floor, including my col-

league's amendment, the Workplace Advancement Act, as well as a provision that would allow greater flexibility for employees with comp time—the same that is enjoyed by those in the public sector—and my colleague from South Dakota who has a strong amendment to help create a better climate for job creation and more opportunity in this country—if this is such a serious issue, which I agree this is an important and serious issue, then why is it these amendments are being blocked? Why is it we are not having a legitimate debate? Unfortunately, what I fear is that an important and legitimate issue is being turned into a political ploy of election-year politics.

I share the sentiments of my colleague from Nebraska. I am very disappointed by this. In fact, one of the concerns I have about the bill pending on the floor—the so-called Paycheck Fairness Act—is that it will actually have the impact of reducing flexibility for working families. It could have the impact of reducing the ability of employers to award merit pay.

I had the privilege of serving as the first woman attorney general in my State. Before I went to the attorney general's office, I worked at a private law firm. I have had the opportunity, in the position in which I serve, to meet incredible women leaders in the health sector and in the business sector. There are many instances, frankly, where women, based on merit, have outperformed their male colleagues. So what we don't want to do is create and pass a law that actually reduces the opportunity for employers in the workplace to reward merit because women want the opportunity to earn more than men when they do a better job, just as my male counterparts want. That is one of my concerns about the so-called Paycheck Fairness Act.

That is why I very much appreciate what I think is a better approach by my colleague, which reinforces the enforcement of laws that have been in place, that rightly prohibits discrimination based on sex in the workplace, including discrimination based on people being paid differently even though they are performing the same job, where there are no merit differences. That is wrong. It is unacceptable. The ideas of my colleague from Nebraska are very good and I would hope the majority leader would allow a vote.

I would also like to discuss the amendment that was offered by Senator MCCONNELL, of which I am a co-sponsor, that would provide working families with more flexibility in the workforce. In fact, what it would do is allow the same options currently available to those in the public sector to working families in the private sector. It would allow workers—if they want to; and it is their choice—to receive comp time instead of overtime pay so they can have more time off if they want and they choose. This is all voluntary. So if they want more time off to go to that soccer game, if they want

more time off to have time to care for their children or more time to care for an elderly parent, then private sector employers will have the same ability to enter into those agreements voluntarily with their employees, to give their employees more flexibility in the workplace.

What we know is that today nearly 60 percent of working households have two working parents. I happen to live in one of those households, and we struggle in our household to get to all the events we want to get to for our children. I have a 9-year-old and a 6-year-old, and this is a huge challenge that so many parents face.

So the Family Friendly and Workplace Flexibility Act, which is an amendment Senator MCCONNELL offered earlier, that I am a proud cosponsor of, would provide this needed flexibility for employees, workers, and let them decide with their employer whether they would like to receive more comp time. Right now public sector employees have the right to do this. They have this flexibility. It seems we should provide the same legal framework allowing private sector employees this type of flexibility, with more and more families trying to balance both parents working and challenging circumstances in the workplace.

In fact, some companies, such as Dell, Bank of America, and GE already provide flexible workplace arrangements to their salaried employees who are exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act. What this would do is allow these types of agreements to other employees, to have access to the same kinds of benefits, if they choose. It is their choice. This is giving families more flexibility, more opportunity to deal with the challenges so many of us are dealing with in terms of balancing work and family and wanting to be good parents, wanting to be good at our jobs.

It seems to me this is a commonsense amendment, and I am disappointed the majority leader would also block this amendment, as well as the excellent amendment offered by my colleague from Nebraska, and, obviously, the amendment that was offered—a very good amendment—by my colleague from South Dakota to deal with this underlying issue of creating a better climate of opportunity for women and men throughout this country.

I believe this is a serious issue. But if it is a real serious issue—which I think we all share a feeling of on both sides of the aisle—then why is this being treated more like a political ploy instead of having a legitimate debate on the floor? Why didn't this go through the regular committee process, where people can offer their amendments and have a markup that can improve and make sure we are addressing the underlying issue?

To me, it is disappointing that the Senate continues to operate in this way because this is not the first time I

have come to the floor or my colleagues have come to the floor with a legitimate amendment that is relevant to the bill that is pending on the floor, yet have been blocked by the majority leader on an important issue.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the Senator from Utah has an amendment he is going to speak to in a moment. I just want to say one thing. I appreciate the observation made by the Senator from New Hampshire Ms. AYOTTE with regard to this going through a regular order process. If this were a serious discussion, there would have been an opportunity to have a debate at the appropriate committee, the HELP Committee.

You just heard great presentations by the Senator from Nebraska and the Senator from New Hampshire on amendments that they would like to have considered and debated and voted on—substantive amendments that address what is at the heart of this issue. I think we all understand what this is about. I mentioned this morning on the floor the New York Times story from a couple weeks ago about what the intention is with regard to these issues. Again, this is from the New York Times story, and I quote: “to be timed to coincide with campaign-style trips by President Obama.” “Democrats concede,” the Times reports, “that making new laws is not really the point. Rather, they are trying to force Republicans to vote against them.” The article goes on to say—and I quote again:

Privately, White House officials say they have no intention of searching for any grand bargain with Republicans on any of these issues. “The point isn’t to compromise” . . .

That is reporting from the New York Times, and quoting a White House official with regard to this.

This is clearly designed as a political ploy, as my colleagues from New Hampshire and Nebraska pointed out. If we were serious about this, there would be an open process where we could consider amendments—amendments that improve and strengthen the legislation that is before us—and actually it would be a better approach to addressing the issue that is before us; that is, to try to create better salaries, better wages, better opportunities for women. I say that as somebody who is the father of two adult daughters who are both in the workplace. I want to see them have every opportunity to advance themselves and to maximize the potential they have. But we cannot do that if we have policies coming out of Washington, DC, that make it more difficult, more expensive to create jobs, that throw a big wet blanket on our economy, and stifle the growth we need to create those types of opportunities for all Americans.

The Senator from Utah is here. He is going to speak to his amendment. But I think it is very clear what this is about; that is, simply trying to score a

political point rather than have a serious, meaningful, substantive debate about solving an issue.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, the Senator from South Dakota, for his leadership in this area. I agree with his comments and support those statements, along with the other actions taken by my colleagues from New Hampshire, Kentucky, and Nebraska, in addition to others.

I too had an amendment I wanted to present in connection with this legislation. I too offered that up and identified reasons why this is both relevant and germane to the legislation at hand. Unfortunately, the majority leader saw fit to block this, to object to it, to refuse altogether to allow the U.S. Senate—which is supposed to be the world’s greatest deliberative legislative body—to consider these or any of the other amendments that were presented along with them.

We are not asking for passage by unanimous consent. We recognize some people might not share our views. We recognize there might be a diversity of opinion within the body. We nevertheless believe, as U.S. Senators, we are entitled to have these amendments considered because they are relevant, because they are germane. We also think they should be considered because they would benefit the American people.

This is the sort of thing we are supposed to do. It is what we do. What we are supposed to be doing as Senators is to be offering amendments and voting on amendments to make legislation we consider better. You see, the amendment process can make a bad bill good or at least better, and that is exactly why we have an obligation to consider amendments.

It is important to point out here that one of the reasons why I ran this amendment in the first place has to do with the fact that one of the struggles facing working families today is the constant struggle moms and dads feel as they try to juggle the work-life balance. Parents today need to juggle work, home, kids, community, and other obligations they face.

For many families, especially families with young children, the most precious commodity parents have is time. But today Federal labor laws severely, and I believe unfairly, restrict the way moms and dads and everyone else can use their time. That is because many of those laws were written decades ago—decades ago—before the Internet existed; decades ago, when a number of demographic factors were aligned much differently than they are today, when a number of social trends operated much differently in our economy than they do today. Because of these laws—these same Buddy Holly-era, Elvis-era laws—because of these same antiquated laws that need to be updated, an hourly employee who works

overtime is not allowed to take comp time, not allowed to take flextime. Even if she prefers it, her boss cannot even offer it without violating Federal law.

Today, if a working mom or a working dad stays late at the office on Monday or Tuesday, and instead of receiving extra pay wants to get compensated by leaving early on Friday and spend the afternoon with the kids, that kind of arrangement could well be violating Federal law. That sounds unfair, especially to parents, and it is unfair, especially to parents and their children and everyone else.

It also seems like the kind of arrangement that should not be prohibited by Federal law but ought to be perfectly acceptable. But how do we know that for sure? Well, we know that for sure because Congress gave a special exemption from that very law—the law I just described a moment ago—that is available only for government employees. This is unacceptable. The same work-life options that have been made available by Congress itself to government employees should be available to the citizens they serve.

In May of last year, the House of Representatives responded to this deficit in existing Federal law by passing the Working Families Flexibility Act, sponsored by Representative MARTHA ROBY of Alabama, to equalize the comp time rules, existing within a government employment context, for all workers. Last fall, I introduced companion legislation in the Senate proposing to do exactly the same thing.

Now, today, I would like to offer an amendment that is modeled on this same legislation to end this flextime discrimination, this comp time discrimination against private sector workers. You talk to any working mom or any working dad and they will tell you they need more time.

Now, Mr. President, as you well know, we cannot legislate another hour in the day. If we could, I am sure it would have been done by now, and, frankly, I am a little surprised someone has not tried it. But we know mathematically it will not work. It would not do any good. But what we can do is to help working people so they can better balance the demands they face—the demands of family and work and community and every other demand they face. We can ease some of this pressure by removing an unnecessary, outdated, and manifestly unfair Federal restriction on utilizing comp time in the private sector.

There are real problems in this world. There are bad things that can be and must be prohibited by Federal law. But the fact that working parents would prefer, quite understandably, to spend more time with their families is not one of those things that needs to be prohibited, nor is it one of those things that we should allow to continue to be prohibited, especially when it is prohibited in a patently unfair discriminatory fashion—one that inures to the

benefit of government employees, inures unfairly to the detriment of everyone else.

Congress needs to stop punishing America's moms and dads for wanting the same fair treatment that government employees are able to receive through comp time and flextime programs. The United States of America deserves to have amendments like this one, and other amendments, that would make our laws less intrusive, less oppressive, less unfair, that would lead to the development of a more fair, just economy, and a more fair, just system of laws.

We are never going to be able to get there if we are not even allowed to debate and discuss and vote on it, consider, much less pass, amendments. It is time to restore the Senate to what it was always intended to be, which is the world's greatest deliberative legislative body. That cannot happen when amendments like this one are categorically blocked from consideration. We must end this. We must do better. We can and we must and we will.

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.

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

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

#### HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, last October families and communities across our country were forced to endure a completely unnecessary government shutdown. Coming after years of budget uncertainty and constant crises, the shutdown hurt our workers and threatened our fragile economic recovery. It shook the confidence of people across the country who expected their elected officials to come together to avoid such a needless and self-inflicted crisis. It was a dark time here in Congress. I think many of my colleagues regret letting the tea party minority push us into that.

When the shutdown finally ended, I sat down with House Budget Committee chairman PAUL RYAN in a budget conference that many of us had been trying to start for months. We worked through the issues. We compromised. We reached a 2-year budget deal that rolled back the devastating cuts from sequestration. We prevented another government shutdown and restored much needed certainty to the budget process.

That budget deal was a strong step in the right direction, but it was not the only step Congress needs to take to create jobs and economic growth. It was not the only step we need to take to ensure that we do not lurch to another avoidable crisis because if Congress does not act, we are headed toward another crisis in just a few months—not a budget crisis this time

but a construction shutdown that could ramp up when our highway trust fund reaches critically low levels.

It will get worse and worse if we do not solve the problem. So I have come to the floor today to call on my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, to work together to avert this looming crisis and to do it in a commonsense way that gives our States the multiyear certainty they need to plan projects, to invest in their communities, and to create jobs.

Since the mid-1950s our Nation has relied on the highway trust fund to support transportation projects that create jobs and keep our economy moving. The fund helps to repave our roads so they are not pockmarked with potholes. It helps congestion on our Nation's highways, and it helps repair bridges that are outdated and unsafe.

But as soon as July—just a few months from now—the Department of Transportation predicts the highway trust fund will reach a critically low level. If this is not resolved, construction projects to improve our roads and our bridges could shut down and leave workers without a paycheck.

We are already seeing some consequences from this crisis. In Arkansas, 10 construction projects, such as building highway connections and replacing bridges, have already been put on hold. The State of Colorado wants to widen a major highway to ease congestion between Denver and Fort Collins, but officials say that with this funding shortage in the highway trust fund, that project could be delayed. These are not isolated cases. States from Vermont to California might have to stop construction in its tracks because of this highway trust fund shortfall.

This crisis will also cut jobs. As we all know, construction is at its peak in the summer months. But without funding States may have no choice but to stop construction and leave workers without a job. That is going to hurt communities with needless delays on the very improvements that would help our businesses and spur economic growth.

This is unacceptable. It is unnecessary. Congress needs to work to avoid this construction shutdown. There is no reason—none—to lurch to another avoidable crisis when workers and families across the country are struggling. We need to ensure that construction can continue this summer. We need to support workers. We need to deliver a multiyear solution for the highway trust fund.

Fortunately, we can solve this in a way that should have bipartisan support. President Obama and House Republican DAVE CAMP, who chairs the House Ways and Means Committee, have proposed using corporate revenue to shore up the highway trust fund. That approach makes a lot of sense. By closing wasteful corporate tax loopholes, we can support improvements to our roads and bridges that benefit ev-

eryone—including our big businesses, so they can move their products quickly and efficiently—and make our broken Tax Code a bit fairer in the process. We can start by taking a close look at the tax loopholes House Republicans have proposed closing in Chairman CAMP's recent plan.

Replenishing the highway trust fund with revenue by closing wasteful corporate loopholes will provide multiyear funding so we can provide our States with the certainty they need to plan. That kind of certainty has been absent for a long time. It has forced States to hold off on bigger projects that will help create jobs and long-term economic growth.

I am very hopeful that Democrats and Republicans can work together to restore some certainty to States around our country. I know bipartisan support is possible, especially on an issue as important as this one. Since the highway trust fund's inception under Dwight D. Eisenhower, Republicans and Democrats have come together to invest in this national priority. Under Democratic and Republican Presidencies—from President Clinton to President Reagan to President Clinton—we updated and supported the highway trust fund. Even 2 years ago in a hyperpartisan election year, Congress reached a bipartisan agreement so that we could continue to build the roads and bridges and transit systems our communities need. In the past Republicans and Democrats have stepped up to support our workers and make sure we can invest in our transportation systems that put workers on the job and help businesses move their goods and help our economy grow.

There is no reason to wait until the last minute to get this done. The threat is growing on our construction sites and for jobs across the country. We have to give our States and our communities the confidence that Congress will not push them into another crisis.

Six months ago our communities and families endured a needless government shutdown. Americans are sick and tired of the dysfunction of Washington, DC, and constant crises. There is no reason for Congress to put them through anything even remotely similar, especially over transportation projects that will benefit our families, our communities, and our economy.

We must act to prevent a construction shutdown this summer. Let's build on the common ground that Democrats and Republicans share on this issue. Let's work together to show the American people that Congress can act to support our workers, families, and communities. Let's prevent a construction shutdown and give the highway trust fund some certainty. We need to make sure our States can keep investing in jobs and economic growth at this critical time.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask that all time be yielded back.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF NEIL GREGORY KORNZE TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

NOMINATION OF FRANK G. KLOTZ TO BE UNDER SECRETARY FOR NUCLEAR SECURITY

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nominations of Neil Gregory Kornze, of Nevada, to be Director of the Bureau of Land Management, and Frank G. Klotz, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary for Nuclear Security.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time has been yielded back.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Neil Gregory Kornze, of Nevada, to be Director of the Bureau of Land Management?

The clerk will call the roll. The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN).

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

The result was announced—yeas 71, nays 28, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 102 Ex.]

YEAS—71

Alexander	Crapo	Klobuchar
Ayotte	Donnelly	Landrieu
Baldwin	Durbin	Leahy
Begich	Feinstein	Levin
Bennet	Flake	Manchin
Blumenthal	Franken	Markey
Blunt	Gillibrand	McCaskill
Booker	Hagan	Menendez
Boxer	Harkin	Merkley
Brown	Hatch	Mikulski
Cantwell	Heinrich	Murkowski
Cardin	Heitkamp	Murphy
Carper	Heller	Murray
Casey	Hirono	Nelson
Chambliss	Hoeven	Portman
Coats	Isakson	Pryor
Collins	Johnson (SD)	Reed
Coons	Kaine	Reid
Corker	King	Risch

Rockefeller	Stabenow	Warner
Sanders	Tester	Warren
Schatz	Udall (CO)	Whitehouse
Schumer	Udall (NM)	Wyden
Shaheen	Walsh	

NAYS—28

Barrasso	Inhofe	Rubio
Boozman	Johanns	Scott
Burr	Johnson (WI)	Sessions
Cochran	Kirk	Shelby
Cornyn	Lee	Thune
Cruz	McCain	Toomey
Enzi	McConnell	Vitter
Fischer	Moran	Wicker
Graham	Paul	
Grassley	Roberts	

NOT VOTING—1

Coburn

The nomination was confirmed. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

VOTE ON KLOTZ NOMINATION

Mr. REID. Madam President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is now 2 minutes of debate prior to a vote on the Klotz nomination.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I yield back the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Frank G. Klotz, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary for Nuclear Security?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table. The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PAYCHECK FAIRNESS ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I believe we are done with the voting at this point.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in legislative session.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I would like to talk for a moment about the critical importance to women and families across Michigan and the country of ending pay discrimination against women so women will finally get equal pay for equal work.

I was so proud to see so many colleagues on the floor earlier today, including the distinguished Presiding Officer, speaking about the importance of women being able to earn a full dollar instead of 77 cents on every dollar.

Part of giving everyone in this country a fair shot to get ahead is not only making sure they are getting paid a fair wage, which we are fighting to make sure happens, but also to make sure they are not getting paid less simply because of their gender. If somebody is working 40 hours a week, they ought to be paid the same for 40 hours a week if it is the same job. That is what the Paycheck Fairness Act is

really all about. It gives everyone, regardless of their gender, the tools they need to help end gender discrimination in pay and hold those engaged in discriminatory behavior accountable. That is really what it is all about, and we will have a chance very soon to vote.

I hope we would all agree that discrimination because of gender or for any reason has no place in our society. Yet too many Americans rightly feel they are trapped in a rigged game where heads, the privileged and powerful win, and tails, everybody else loses.

When it comes to pay, we know the system is rigged against women. Today, in 2014, women still only make 77 cents for every dollar compared to a man doing exactly the same work. That is the national average. It is even worse in many places around the country. Frankly, it is even worse for women of color, with African-American women getting paid even less and Latinas doing worse still.

My colleagues and I have been speaking on the floor today not just because we are voting on the Paycheck Fairness Act tomorrow but also because today is what we are calling Equal Pay Day. April 8 is the day women finally catch up. When you look at all the work that was done during the whole calendar year of 2013, and then add January, February, and March through April 8, that is how long it has taken women to make the same income as a man in the same job who worked last year. A woman has to work 1 year, 3 months, and 8 days in order to earn the same amount as a man who has worked 1 year. That is just not right, and that is what this debate is all about.

Some people say we are just talking about pennies on the dollar and dismiss the issue as nonsense or worse. Those pennies add up—hour after hour, day after day, week after week, year after year.

In my home State of Michigan, pay discrimination robs the average working woman and her family of more than \$13,000 in wages every single year—\$13,000 out of their pocket just because they are a woman rather than a man in the same job. While these women are working for discounted wages, they certainly don't get a 23-percent discount on their gas. They don't pay 23 cents less on every dollar at the grocery store or when the rent or the mortgage comes due.

In fact, I have a chart to show what the average working woman and her family in Michigan could buy with the \$13,000 a year she has worked hard every day to earn but never sees in her paycheck. She could buy just over 2 year's worth of food for her family. She could pay for almost a year on her mortgage and utility. Can you imagine that? Mortgage and utility payments go right out the window because she is not getting equal pay for equal work. She could buy almost 3,500 gallons of gasoline for her car. That is enough gas for me to drive back and forth from Detroit to Los Angeles more than 16