

For that reason, a number of us have come together to write a piece of legislation. It is legislation that is intended to try to drive an outcome. It is a piece of legislation that moves away from the way the administration has been dealing with this, where they are always a day late and a dollar short. They are always responding to what Russia does. They are always doing something that, in essence, deals with the situation after something bad has already occurred. This legislation is designed to, again, drive an outcome, to show the administration there is a strategic way to deal with this issue.

Let me tell you what this does not do. I was very disappointed to pick up the Wall Street Journal this morning and read on the front page that those of us who are concerned—which, by the way, is strongly bipartisan, strongly bipartisan in this Senate: concern about what is happening in Ukraine and concern about the fact that the administration has not done those things with economic sanctions in a stronger way to cause Russia to pay a price for what it is doing—but I was very disappointed to pick up the paper and read where the President said those people who want to see military action by the United States in Ukraine—that is not what this bill does. As a matter of fact, what the bill does is it lays out a strategy to try to keep that from happening, which I think numbers of us on both sides of the aisle are concerned that under the current policy of saying what we are going to do and not doing it, of basically continuing to allow Russia to do what it is doing inside eastern Ukraine, that this is actually the very policy that could lead to significant problems down the road. We all understand these are how major conflicts unfold, and we all understand we are talking about two countries that are armed with nuclear weapons.

So today at noon a number of us will gather around and introduce a piece of legislation that does three things.

No. 1, it strengthens NATO. I think everyone would agree that the commitment of NATO to its allies, our commitment to NATO, our partners' commitment to NATO, has waned over the last period of time.

By the way, this is not something that has just occurred under this administration. It has been going on for some time. We have only three countries, as a matter of fact—three countries—within the NATO alliance that are actually honoring their commitments relative to the support of NATO.

So the first piece of this is to strengthen NATO. It is to expedite, by the way, this administration's own plan relative to missile defense—the plan they have laid out. It does not change that technology.

The second piece of this legislation is intended to deter Russia from what it is doing.

If my colleagues remember, the Geneva accords said Putin would move the Russian troops who are intimi-

dating people inside Eastern Ukraine away from the border. But I think what we have seen now is that "red line" has changed. Now what the administration is focused on is them actually not going inside the country, but all of us understand that Russia is actually accomplishing what it wishes to accomplish inside Ukraine without even sending troops in because they are able to do it again with black ops.

So this piece of legislation that my friend from Wyoming and so many others were involved in developing lays down clear sanctions first—beginning today, or after passage, beginning with sanctions—sanctions that hit several important entities in the banking sector and in the energy sector, so we actually do something that affects the Russian economy until such time that they pull those troops away from the border and they remove those black ops operators inside the country who are fomenting the problems.

Secondly, in the event Russia does actually cross the border with military troops, this bill again imposes much deeper sanctions on Russia and certainly signifies to them what kind of price they would pay.

Again, earlier this week when the administration put forth its sanctions, it was a marvel to see that the stock market in Russia, several days in a row, continued to go up. It had no affect on Russia, none. Editorial writers and people on both sides of the aisle understand this was nothing more than a slap on the wrist. Putin understands that. Russia understands that. They understand that we as a nation so far have not signified that we are willing to use these economic sanctions in a way—through the President's own Executive order, I might add—to change behavior. So we are very concerned about the direction this is taking.

The third thing this bill will do is harden our non-NATO allies. I think my colleagues know that in the country of Moldavia, from where I just recently returned—and Senator BARRASSO on another trip just recently returned as well—and in Georgia and in Ukraine, there are a number of things we need to do as a nation to help them harden their country and this bill lays objective things out. Let me give one example. In the Russian-speaking area of Eastern Ukraine, the only information the people who are Russian-speaking in that part of the world are receiving is coming from Russia. It is propaganda about actions the United States is taking, which we aren't, and the great lives they will have if Russia is able to annex that part of the world. So at a minimum we need to make sure the information those people are receiving is very different. There are so many actions that we as a nation can be taking to ensure that Ukraine is not destabilized, that Moldavia is not destabilized, that Georgia is not destabilized.

Let me say this in closing because I see my friend is ready to speak on an-

other topic. This bill we are introducing today is a serious piece of legislation. As a matter of fact, I am gratified by the work so many Members have put into making this legislation as it is. It is strategic. It is serious. It tries to accomplish a good outcome. I hope the introduction of this legislation will cause the administration to step away from the microphones and the cameras and to step away from the empty rhetoric that has been shared all across this world, to step back and say wouldn't it be good if we laid out a strategic approach to Europe.

It is time we realized Russia is destabilizing Europe, and that affects our citizens. Our citizens are 4½ percent of the world in population. We benefit from 22 percent of the world's gross domestic product. So the fact of the world being secure is not only important to us because of human rights and democracy and freedom, but it is important to the very livelihoods of the people of our country.

So I thank those involved. I look forward to discussing this more fully at noon today when we unveil this. Again, I hope the White House and those involved in setting foreign policy will step back, they will sit down, and they will begin to do take actions that strengthen NATO more fully. I hope they will take those actions that will certainly cause Russia to understand exactly what will happen if they continue on the path they are on, as well as strengthen our non-NATO allies which, because of the policies we have not put in place, are continually being destabilized.

Mr. CORKER. I yield the floor and I thank the Chair for the time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, first, I commend my friend and colleague from Tennessee for his leadership on foreign affairs and his efforts in these areas. I fully support all of his efforts to bring forth a united position on behalf of our country.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor because the American people have just received more horrible news about our economy.

The Commerce Department reported this morning that our economy grew at the smallest rate in 3 years. The exact number is 0.1 percent—much worse than expected. To be specific, investment in business equipment declined, residential home construction declined, U.S. exports fell sharply, and companies increased inventories at a much slower rate.

I wish to read what some of the economists have said about this. Dan North, a chief economist, said:

We've been living in sub-3 percent land, and people have gotten used to that as the new normal. But it's not. It's anemic.

To make matters worse, the Financial Times this morning is reporting

that China is poised this year to pass the United States as the world's leading economic power.

The American people deserve better than this and they shouldn't have to accept that anemic growth as the new normal. They deserve growth, good jobs, and better opportunities. That is not what they are finding from the Obama economy. Instead, the President continues to push an agenda that makes it harder for Americans to find good jobs and to bring home bigger paychecks. So I wish to speak about how the health care law specifically is slowing growth and how it is making American paychecks smaller.

I met earlier today with business leaders from Wyoming. They are here from Casper, Cheyenne, and Jackson, and I have heard input from them regarding how the health care law has impacted their businesses, how it has impacted our State of Wyoming, and how it has impacted our economy not just in Wyoming but nationwide.

It is interesting to watch the White House and the President specifically spike the ball, claiming that 8 million people signed up for health insurance through the government exchanges. At the same time, President Obama has declared that the national debate about his health care law is over. The meaning of the number is highly questionable, and the administration's victory lap is premature. In fact, the ObamaCare debate is far from over.

So I come to the floor to speak about additional side effects of the Obama health care law. I will continue to do this week after week because the side effects on the American people and the American economy and on health care in this country continue to be very damaging.

I will speak about smaller paychecks as one of the ObamaCare side effects, to point out that the debate is not over for the millions of Americans who are experiencing the negative side effects of the President's health care law voted on by Democrats and not by Republicans. One of the worst of these side effects is the smaller paychecks many families are experiencing specifically because of the mandates of the health care law. It is happening all around the country.

Let me tell my colleagues what is happening as reported by the New Hampshire Union Leader. This is just one example. The article was talking about small businesses that have found that paperwork and costs related to the law are threatening the economic platforms on which their companies are built. It quoted a man who runs a ski area saying the law could mean he has to open later in the season and close earlier in the season. That is because people on his payroll for 120 consecutive days or longer have to be offered health insurance under the Democrats' health care law.

Mother Nature might say there is plenty of snow, the skiers and snowboarders are ready to go, the resort

wants to open, restaurants are ready to serve people, hotels are ready to host people, but ObamaCare says the resort can't open without facing enormous costs for Washington-mandated insurance. It is hurting people working at the ski resorts. It is hurting people in businesses in those communities.

Who pays for the negative side effects? It is the seasonal workers who will now be limited to fewer than 120 days of work at ski facilities such as this one in New Hampshire. They will work fewer days with smaller paychecks because of the health care law. The New Hampshire Union Leader summed it up this way: "As snowboarders say: bummer."

It is not just seasonal workers who are being hurt. This column also talks about the ski resorts in Colorado being hurt.

In North Carolina, State government agencies are starting to get very worried about how to deal with the health care law's mandates. The law says employers—including State and local governments—have to cover people who work 30 hours a week or more. That is whom the law considers full-time workers. When I talk to business leaders from Wyoming, most people think of full-time work as 40 hours. Not President Obama. He is a 30-hour man.

According to a story from WTVD in Raleigh, State agencies are looking at cutting the hours of part-time workers to keep them under that 30-hour limit.

The North Carolina Agriculture Department has about 250 part-time employees who are now working more than 30 hours. They have 250 workers in the North Carolina Agriculture Department, and those 250 people are working more than 30 hours, but they are part time. The North Carolina Department of Transportation has almost 600 people in the same situation. So North Carolina is going to have to look very closely at what to do with those people, and that can mean smaller paychecks.

Local governments are having to make these same decisions because of the health care law. WITN, another station in Greenville, NC, did a story last month about how schools are cutting the hours substitute teachers can work—the same 30-hour Obama work-week limit again. The health care law wasn't about substitute teachers, but they are the ones feeling the negative side effects and they are the ones seeing smaller paychecks.

The story quoted a teacher in Pitt County, NC, who said she got a letter from the school district there telling her she wouldn't be able to work as much. Substitute teachers are now limited to 3 days a week. Why? Because of the expensive mandates of ObamaCare.

She told the TV station, "I'm willing and able to work, and now they're telling me I can only work for so long."

This teacher is one of 200 in her North Carolina school district who are going to be limited to 21 hours a week, and she is wondering how she is going

to make ends meet with 21 hours a week. That is a side effect of the health care law that means smaller paychecks for substitute teachers.

President Obama says the debate is over. Is it over for teachers in North Carolina who are seeing their time cut to under 30 hours a week? Is it over in ski resort communities in New Hampshire and in Colorado?

Look what is going on in Iowa. An article just last week in the Ottumwa Courier said that a local school district was cutting the hours on all paraeducators from 37 hours per week to 29 hours. Those extra hours may not mean much to Democrats on the floor of the Senate or the House Members who voted for this health care law, but they are a real big deal for a lot of families struggling in the Obama economy.

In Colorado, the Aspen Daily News reported last month that adjunct professors at Colorado Mountain College are going to have the same limit of 29 hours a week. This school has 112 full-time faculty, but it has 600 part-time professors. Some of them just want to teach a class here or there to make extra money, but some of them are trying to string together enough hours to support themselves, to support their families, and they are getting hammered by the President's health care law that every Democrat in this body voted for.

It is happening all over the country. We have heard stories today about New Hampshire, North Carolina, Colorado. Here is a final example. A borough in Alaska announced earlier this year that it was putting a cap on the hours of firefighters and emergency medical technicians.

According to one technician, some stations are limiting people to just 24 hours a week. So we see teachers, firefighters, professors, seasonal workers all hurt by the side effects of the Obama health care law, and they are all getting hit with smaller paychecks—nothing they have asked for. They want to work. They are ready to work. They are willing to work.

We have a weak economy, an anemic economy, and the President and Democrats do not seem to care. They do not seem to care. They think the debate is over. President Obama says the debate is over.

He says Democrats who voted for this should forcefully defend it and be proud. How can the President forcefully defend these smaller paychecks? How can the President be proud of these smaller paychecks because of his law and what he had Democrats vote for—in North Carolina; Alaska, where you hear these stories; New Hampshire; one after another after another; Colorado.

Well, it is not over for Americans, who are continuing to get hit in their wallets, people in New Hampshire, North Carolina, Iowa, Colorado, Alaska, all over the rest of the country. It is not over for Republicans, who will continue to stand for those Americans

and keep pushing for commonsense reforms that will actually help people get the care and what they wanted all along, which was better access to quality, affordable health care.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes and that following my remarks Senator FRANKEN be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes and Senator MARKEY be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes.

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

THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this morning to talk about the matter before us, which is the minimum wage. Today the Senate will vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to the Minimum Wage Fairness Act, the legislation we are considering, which would increase the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour over the course of 3 years. We do not know what the result will be today, but we are working to get as much support as possible because getting past this first hurdle, of course, is essential to getting the bill passed, to giving Americans who are working very hard a fair shot at some economic security that they may not have right now.

We have a lot of work to do because there are still people out there—especially here in Washington—who are making arguments that do not make a lot of sense and, to me, do not make a lot of sense to the people of Pennsylvania. Where I came from, when someone works a full day and a full week, they should not—most people believe they should have a fair shot at making not just a living but making sure they have enough of a living that they can lift themselves out of poverty. You should not work 40 hours a week and be paid a poverty wage. Unfortunately, that is the case for far too many Americans.

Increasing the minimum wage would help workers make ends meet, and it would offer a lift up the ladder to the middle class and boost the economy by boosting new spending. We know that is the case. All the data shows that. All the studies show that. But we still have to make the case to some folks here in Washington.

Wages for most workers are not keeping up with the cost of living, the cost

of paying a mortgage and raising a family and some of the other middle-class concerns. The pay for minimum-wage workers is not keeping up with inflation.

Six years have passed since the last minimum wage increase was enacted. Pay for the middle class is stagnant, while the gap between the haves and the have-nots has widened substantially.

The chart on my right tells the story of what could happen if we are able to pass an increase in the minimum wage. It is about giving a fair shot to our families and to our workers by raising the minimum wage. Increasing the minimum wage helps a lot of folks across the country more broadly. Of course, it helps working families.

Look at these numbers. Workers who would get a raise: 27.8 million workers across the country. There are very few things the Senate can do today or this week that would provide that kind of direct economic jump-start to so many communities and to 27.8 million people.

Look at the boost to GDP. I mentioned that earlier—a \$22 billion boost to the economy. Again, there are very few things, if any, we could pass in the Senate that would provide that kind of jump-start to the economy when we need it.

The number of jobs created across the country: some 85,000. Some think the number is higher than that. I know this would have a job-increase impact into the thousands in Pennsylvania.

Look at the number for women. There is mostly an issue about women who are working every day trying to support their families. It also has an impact, obviously, on children. Women who would get a raise: 15.3 million women across the country. I would like to hear someone who is on the other side of the aisle demonstrate to women across this country what they will do in place of that if they are going to say that now is not the time for a raise in the minimum wage. What about those women who are shouldering most of the burden to raise their families and to make their way in a tough economy?

Children with a parent who would get a raise: 14 million children have a parent who would get a boost in the minimum wage. Again, I would say: What is your answer or what is your strategy to give a boost but really, more appropriately stated, a measure of security to our children? I am not sure I can name another action this Senate could take to make sure 14 million children have a measure of security that they do not have today even in an economy that—in some parts of the country—is getting a little better.

Americans overall lifted out of poverty: 2 million Americans will be lifted out of poverty if we pass an increase in the minimum wage.

Again, I would ask anyone on the other side, is there an action, is there a bill, is there a vote, is there a step we can take in the Senate this week or

next week that would do the same to help 14 million children, to lift 2 million Americans out of poverty? I do not know of any. I will wait and see what their answer is. I hope they will answer that question because they should. This is a debate. They should answer that question. Tell us what you will do to help 14 million children if you are not going to support lifting or raising the minimum wage.

Less spending on food stamps: \$4.6 billion per year. We hear attacks all the time—unjustified though they are—from the other side about SNAP. We used to call it the food stamp program. They are always saying: We need to reduce spending in that program. Well, instead of cutting people, as so many in this body seem to want to do every day of the week, voting for budgets that would slash support for people who need help just having a measure of food security, being able to feed their families, instead of doing that, why don't we support raising the minimum wage, lifting them out of poverty, lifting them out of the dependence they have to have on an important program such as SNAP? That is the better way to reduce those numbers. It is not just a question of what is right; it is a question of the best economic strategy for that worker, for his or her family, and for the economy overall.

Finally, veterans who would get a raise: 1 million veterans. We hear speeches all the time here in Washington from both sides of the aisle. In most cases—in almost every case—they are heartfelt and they are honest about the support that one Senator or a group of Senators provide to help our veterans. I have no doubt that people are sincere when they say that. But there are some opportunities around here where you can take action. You can cast a vote that has a direct benefit not just for 14 million children but in this case for 1 million veterans.

You have to ask yourself, if you cannot cast that vote, what are you going to do? What are you going to do with the power you have to cast your vote, to stand and say: I support an increase in the minimum wage. If you are not going to do that, if you are not going to vote for this or ever vote for this, then what are you going to do to help those same 1 million veterans or those same 14 million children or those 15.3 million women? If you have an answer for that, if you have a different strategy that will get us to these numbers, let's hear it. I would like to hear the answer to that. I have not heard it yet. Maybe I have not been listening. But I will try to listen closely to what the arguments are on the other side of the aisle.

So the hashtag #raisethewage is a good way to summarize why this is so fundamental but really so simple. This is about giving people a fair shot. It is not about some program people are asking to be created. It is about basic fairness in giving folks a fair shot in an economy that is still very tough for a lot of families.