



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 160

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2014

No. 8

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, today teach our lawmakers to do things Your way, embracing Your precepts and walking in Your path. Remind them that the narrow and difficult road less traveled leads to life and few find it. As our Senators receive guidance from You and follow Your leading, replace anxiety with calm, confusion with clarity, and despair with hope. May Your peace become the hallmark of their labors as You keep them focused on the priorities that reflect Your kingdom. We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

HOMEOWNER FLOOD INSURANCE AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 2013—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 266.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 266, S. 1846, a bill to delay the implementation of certain provisions of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we will have further discussion on this matter today; that is, the matter I moved to. On our side, we have cleared the bill. We could complete it quickly. We are waiting to hear from the Republicans. This is one of the bills where, if we need to do some amendments on it, we can do some amendments on it.

The point is, I think we should try to get this done. We have been waiting for a long time to get this done. This is truly a bipartisan bill. As I explained to the Republican leader yesterday, I have had a number of Republicans come to me to see if there is a way this bill could be moved quickly. It has become a desperate situation, with so many problems. Construction has been, in some areas, brought to a halt. So hopefully we can work something out on this in the immediate future.

SCHEDULE

Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will resume consideration of the unemployment insurance extension. The time until 12:30 will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first 30 minutes and the Republicans the second 30 minutes. The Senate will then recess from 12:30 until 2:15, as we do every Tuesday, for our caucus meetings. At 2:30, there will be up to two rollcall votes; first, a cloture vote on the Reed of Rhode Island substitute amendment. If cloture is not invoked, there will be a second cloture vote on the underlying bill.

We have had some good discussions, and I am going to—as I know the Republican leader will—discuss if there is a way to move forward on unemployment insurance. I hope there is. At 2:30 today, after our caucuses, we will come out and see if there is a consent agreement we can present to the Senate to move forward with the legislation. I hope that is possible, and we are certainly trying.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. President, each day Bloomberg releases a list of the 300 richest individuals in the world—the Bloomberg Billionaires index. The list includes 67 fortunate and really fabulously wealthy Americans. More than any other country in the world, we have 67 of the 300. Last year, the members of the billionaire index added \$524 billion in new wealth to their net worth.

Listen to that, Mr. President: Last year, the billionaire's index—these 67 people—added \$524 billion of new wealth. Not million but billion—\$2 billion per person last year.

These are 300 fortunate individuals, flooded with their already flush coffers, with another \$2 billion each, while millions of American families struggle to pay their rent. I don't begrudge these people at their making a lot of money. Their good fortune is something that speaks well of our country. We are truly a land of opportunity. But I do believe it is time for average Americans to share in that prosperity, particularly as the economy recovers.

If this were just a quirk in the indexes of how rich people are, that would be one thing, but in the last 30 years this same top 1 percent have seen their wealth increase—their incomes triple—while the middle class has gone down 10 percent in the same 30 years. It is time for average Americans—and I believe this so sincerely—to share in that prosperity in some way, especially as the economy is now recovering.

For most Americans, hard work isn't paying off the way it does for the top 1 percent. For many it has been impossible to even find steady full-time work since the recession began. That is why we must not abandon the 1.4 million Americans who are out there struggling—unemployed people who have been cut off from these crucial benefits now for the last 2 weeks, and they are looking forward to maybe being cut off forever.

This small stipend—an average of \$300 per week—is helping them keep

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



Printed on recycled paper.

food on the table and, literally, roofs over their heads while they look for work. I read here on the floor a letter from someone in Nevada, a woman, who said she doesn't know where she is going to go, what she is going to do. She, as have many people, has looked for work so very hard. As part of the unemployment compensation, an individual has to have been fired or laid off through no fault of their own and then they have to look for work every week.

Americans do want to go back to work. They do not want to set a bad example for their kids. They do not want to live off the system—whatever that means. But there is still only one job for every three people searching all over America. Some places are worse off than others. In Nevada, a man wrote to me—1 of almost 20,000 Nevadans who lost unemployment benefits last month—and he said he had applied for 700 jobs in the last 10 months—not 70, not 7, but 700. He has been able to get a dozen interviews but still can't find work.

But he hasn't given up hope. He hasn't given up the hope of finding a good-paying job, and he hasn't given up hope that Congress will restore emergency unemployment benefits until he does find a job. Neither have the 200 Nevada veterans who attended a job fair I put on last week. It was held at the University of Nevada over the weekend. It is shameful that tens of thousands of veterans of this Nation's armed forces lost their unemployment benefits last year.

It is inspiring to hear the stories of hard-working Americans who simply won't give up until they find a job. So I hope Senators will remember the perseverance of these brave individuals as they continue to seek a compromise here in this body that would restore emergency unemployment benefits to 1.4 million Americans.

This says it all: 67 of the richest people in the world living in America got a \$2 billion tip last year. For 1.4 million Americans, they lost \$300 on average per week. That is not fair. This is America, the land of opportunity. People who work hard are supposed to be rewarded—but not during the last 30 years.

The middle class has lost 10 percent of their income, and that doesn't take into consideration the poor—the poor. There are more poor than ever in America. The middle class, we know, is being squeezed out of existence. It is time for us to take care of these people who are desperate for help. That is what the government is all about.

Looking back at my home life, I feel government has been good for the people who live in my little town of Searchlight. It is a town mostly of old people. Many of them are getting pensions from wherever they worked. They get Social Security. But the government has done so many good things. Let us not denigrate government. This is a time when people have no opportunity. They need government help.

They are desperate. All they want is one job, but they know if there is a vacancy over here, there are going to be scores—and we have seen this in the news accounts of job opportunities—thousands of people showing up for sometimes just a handful of jobs.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on the unemployment insurance bill, there have been productive conversations between the majority leader and several Members on this side. The Republicans have offered numerous commonsense proposals to get to a conclusion. Ideally, we would have spent the past week voting on those proposals, so there is really no good reason for us to be in the position that we are in right now.

Let me just underscore some of the things on my side that we would like to see in the final product. First, the Senate should actually be paying for whatever it passes, and not with spending cuts 11 years from now that we know aren't going to happen. It is also reasonable to expect practical progrowth job creation measures so we can actually get people back to work, and for a solution to be reasonable it should also respect the right of our constituents to be heard on this issue through a more open amendment process.

We have to get away from an attitude that essentially says the views of half the American people don't matter in the Senate. These days it has gotten even worse than that; ideas on both sides are often completely ignored. That is just not how the Senate is supposed to work. So we have an opportunity to begin to start fixing the problem on the bill that is before us. It is the right thing to do. I am hopeful common sense will prevail.

(The further remarks of Mr. MCCONNELL pertaining to the introduction of S. 1916 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. MCCONNELL. I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION EXTENSION ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1845, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1845) to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid (for Reed) amendment No. 2631, relating to extension and modification of emer-

gency unemployment compensation program.

Reid amendment No. 2632 (to amendment No. 2631), to change the enactment date.

Reid motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Finance, with instructions, Reid amendment No. 2633, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 2634 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 2633), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 2635 (to amendment No. 2634), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12:30 p.m. will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first 30 minutes and the Republicans controlling the second 30 minutes.

The Senator from Vermont.

CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I should first note I am pleased to see the Presiding Officer. It is a pleasure to share the podium with him today.

I ask unanimous consent that upon the completion of my remarks, the Chair recognize the senior Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN.

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

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, after many long days and nights of four-party negotiations across a dozen subcommittees over the past month, on Sunday night the Appropriations Committee completed work on the fiscal year 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

I commend Chairwoman MIKULSKI, without whom this would not have been possible. It was, above all, her relentless pursuit of this goal and her unmatched ability to rally her subcommittee troops together to get us to this point.

I would also note that she was helped by some of the most hard working members of the Senate staff one can imagine. I want to especially commend Tim Rieser of my staff, and Janet Stormes and Nikole Manatt who worked with him. I could not keep track of the number of times I received emails or calls at midnight or 1 a.m. from Tim as we worked through all the difficult parts of this bill.

And it could not have been done without the cooperation of my friend from Alabama Senator SHELBY, the committee's ranking member, who knew how important it was to pass appropriations bills rather than put the government on autopilot.

This means there will be no sequester in fiscal year 2014, and there will not be another disastrous government shutdown that achieved nothing, disrupted the lives of millions of American families, and cost the taxpayers some \$24 billion and private industry tens of billions of dollars more.

As Chairman of the Department of State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee, I want to thank Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, who brings a level of energy and knowledge to our subcommittee few can match. He and I