

collecting \$300 a week. So these benefits are not the exclusive province of the very poor.

In fact, more and more they are middle-class, middle-age people who never thought they would be on unemployment insurance, who need this. They are supporting elderly parents. They have children. They have mortgages. They had a professional career—accountant, paralegal, bookkeeper. They are now looking desperately for work. They are people who used to work in dairy processing plants or people who used to work as vice presidents for sales who are so desperate—I assume some of these people, if we looked at their resumes, would be qualified to do many things other than work at a plant, but they are looking because they desperately need work.

We hear this argument, though: Oh, it is a program that doesn't work and the people are undeserving and we are not even doing them a favor by letting them have this benefit. I disagree. I think we have to pass this measure. We have to do it because it is the right thing for these families, it is the right thing for our constituents, and it is the right thing for the economy. It would be foolish, frankly, to take a program that we are confident can save 200,000 jobs, can increase GDP by .2 percent, that is one of the best forms of fiscal policy to stimulate demand and economic growth, and say we are not going to do it. I think we say we have to do it.

There is another aspect of this, too, particularly appropriate to the issue of long-term unemployment. We are seeing a remarkable number of long-term unemployed individuals in this recession. Typically, Congress has only ended these benefits when the long-term unemployment rate was 1.3 percent. Today it's double that at 2.6 percent. Again, this program is a program that takes care of the long-term unemployed.

The standard program in the States is one of 26 weeks. If you have a brief episode of unemployment, if you lose a job and then 5 weeks later you get a job, you are in that first tranche of State benefits. The long-term unemployed are those who have been without work for at least 26 weeks. We have seen the number of long-term unemployed double since previous recessions—from 1.3 percent to 2.6 percent. So this program is more important now than in any previous economic downturn we have had based upon looking at these numbers. This is another reason we have to extend these benefits.

I urge my colleagues to support this procedural vote so that the full Senate can consider the measure and move toward passage. We need to move swiftly to pass this bipartisan bill to provide some certainty, some stability, and some support for families who are struggling in a very difficult market.

The answer I suggest to those who are considering voting against cloture this evening is, fine, you can come

down and tell the clerk no. What are you going to tell the 1,600 people in Hagerstown, MD, and across this country who are desperately looking for work and need some support? What are you going to tell them? No? I hope not.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JANET L. YELLEN TO BE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM

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

The bill clerk read the nomination of Janet L. Yellen, of California, to be Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

Ms. HIRONO. Under the previous order, the time until 5:30 p.m. will be equally divided and controlled in the usual form.

The Senator from Connecticut.

GUN LEGISLATION

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, I hope we will confirm Janet Yellen later today.

I come to the floor for a few minutes to do what I have done most weeks since the failure of this Senate to pass commonsense gun legislation in the spring of 2013, to talk about the number of Americans who have lost their lives due to gun violence. That number stands today at 12,041. Over 12,000 people have died at the hands of gun violence since December 14, which of course is the day in which 20 6-year-olds and 7-year-olds and 6 teachers and professionals who were protecting them lost their lives in Newtown, CT.

This is probably the last time we will have the chance to display this particular number because the Web site which has been totalling this is going to stop doing so. It is probably a good thing in this respect: Once that 1 became a crooked number, we weren't going to have room on this poster any longer; and at some point in the middle of next year, the 1 would click up to a 2 and we would be over 20,000 people killed due to guns. Frankly, this doesn't even count the suicides. This is just the people who have died as a result of gun homicides, and the number just goes up and up at a rate which is hard to comprehend.

So I wish to speak for a few minutes about a few of the representative vic-

tims we have seen across the country in the last year, which make up just a small subset of the 12,000 people, and I hope maybe one of these days it will inspire this place to action.

I was at the swearing in of the new mayor of New Haven on New Year's Day. Toni Harp is the first female mayor of New Haven, the 50th mayor of New Haven, and she will inherit a city being absolutely ravaged by gun violence—20 gun homicides in the last year and 67 shootings. Each one of them hurts, but the last one was particularly devastating.

Javier Martinez died on December 28, 2013. Javier attended a local high school focused on learning about and protecting the environment, Common Ground High School. He was described as one of the most outstanding participants in the 20-year history of a program put on through the school whereby kids spent part of their summer on Block Island, a little island in between Connecticut and Rhode Island, where they work to eliminate invasive species and spread the environmental gospel to visitors to that small island.

He was beloved by his family and by his friends. He was thinking of becoming an arborist or environmental scientist. His community—in particular, his pretty, sleepy neighborhood in which this shooting happened—has been absolutely torn apart through the loss of Javier—Bebo, as he was called by his grandparents.

He is one of 20 people in New Haven, CT, who were lost. Twelve of the 20 were under 30 years old. Eleven of them were men; 17 of them were African American. That is the story in New Haven. It is young African American males who are dying almost every week as part of the 12,041.

Just a couple of months earlier, John Allen Read died in Texas due to a gunshot wound. What makes John Allen Reed exceptional is that he was 5 years old. He is one of dozens of accidental gun deaths happening all across this country.

He and his 6-month-old sibling were in the care of a regular baby sitter, but a baby sitter who feared for her safety so she carried a gun with her. But she left the gun on a table and fell asleep. The 5-year-old got the gun. When she woke up to try to find the kids, she found John dead with a fatal gunshot wound.

We heard the stories all throughout 2013. I don't know whether statistically there were more in 2013 than in previous years. But because we don't require much if any training before buying a gun, we have young baby sitters leaving guns unattended with these absolutely devastating results.

How about 4 months before that in Seattle, where Molly Conley, a 15-year-old, a great goalie on her high school team, a straight-A student, was killed while she was walking back with friends after celebrating her recent birthday at a sleepover. Detectives believe a shooter opened fire on Molly Conley and her group of friends.

Her nickname was “4.0” because she was such a good student. “She always smiled. She gave people smiles, and she was joyful and kind. She had a generous spirit,” said Molly’s mother.

Molly, John, and Javier are just three of the voices of victims we need to start talking about on the floor, because if the statistics don’t seem to be moving people to action, maybe the stories will.

As I hope we will this year, let’s be realistic about what we can and can’t do. I have come here every week to talk about the stories of the people who have died at the hands of guns. I understand there is no law that is going to completely eradicate gun violence, and I understand that there is no one solution at hand which will have a radical transformation overnight.

I believe this is about gun laws. But I also understand it is about better mental health treatment. I also understand it is about a culture of violence. I also understand it is about a sense of hopelessness felt by a lot of kids in poor neighborhoods which leads them to violence as a way of solving common, everyday disputes.

So I am ready on the floor of the Senate to have a real, sober, dispassionate argument about what we can do together this year to try to make sure this number in 2014 is just a little bit lower than it was in 2013.

With that in mind, I will leave us with this one last story, and that is the story of Zina Daniel.

Zina Daniel took out a restraining order on her husband after years of violence and abuse. Police were reportedly called to this home dozens of times. Her husband was upset about that restraining order, and knowing that he couldn’t get a gun at a retailer because he wouldn’t pass a background check, he went online to Armslist. Within hours he found a seller who would supply to him a .40 caliber Glock handgun, which he picked up in a McDonald’s parking lot for \$500 cash. The next day, he went into Zina’s workplace, and he murdered her and two other women. He injured four others.

Zina’s brother said this:

I’m a gun owner, a hunter and a member of the National Rifle Association. I believe in the Second Amendment, but I also believe in sensible gun laws. I’ve seen how devastating gun violence can be. And I know that Radcliffe never should have been able to buy a gun online without a background check. A background check would have saved my sister’s life.

I don’t know what we will be able to get done this year. I don’t know if there are 60 votes in the Senate for the kind of expansion of background checks that many of us, including Zina’s brother, would like to see. But let’s not let the whole year go by without at least some attempt among Senators of good will on both sides of the aisle, so that when this number does come back up at the end of 2014, it is just a little bit lower.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Mr. HELLER. Madam President, I rise today to discuss an issue that has been in the forefront of the minds of many Americans ringing in the new year; that is, extending benefits for the unemployed—something that is important, of course, for a lot of Americans.

Before I begin, I wish to thank my colleague, my friend from Rhode Island, Senator JACK REED, for his hard work and effort on this behalf as we and our staffs worked together to get this proposal moved forward for today’s vote.

I hope that my friends and colleagues in the Senate enjoyed their holidays and that everyone returned refreshed and ready to tackle some of the tough issues we have here in 2014.

Unfortunately, while Congress was in recess, approximately 17,000 Nevadans greeted the new year not with optimistic expectations of a fresh start but with the anxiety of how they are going to feed their families and perhaps even pay their utility bills. When Congress left Washington, DC, in December, a lot of important matters were left undone and expired. As a result, millions of Americans were left with no idea whether their unemployment benefits were going to be fixed retroactively—something that has become, of course, all too common for this Congress to do.

Helping those in need should not be a partisan issue. Providing a limited social safety net is one of the responsibilities of the Federal Government. Unfortunately, instead of planning ahead and figuring out the best way to do that, we are now forced to decide whether to reinstate these benefits after they have expired.

We should provide some relief to the millions of Americans who were left hanging when Congress went home in December and temporarily extend unemployment benefits for the next 3 months. It is the right thing to do. That short period will help these families whose benefits expired abruptly while Congress works out a long-term solution that provides Americans with some certainty and is fiscally responsible.

I understand my colleagues’ concerns about the cost and their desire to pay for this extension. I too want to see our Federal debt brought under control. I think my voting record is proof of that concern.

I too believe Congress should be more focused on passing laws that actually help create jobs. Growing our economy should be the primary focus and concern of this body. As a Senator of the State that leads the Nation in unemployment, believe me, I understand the importance of refocusing on jobs. I would rather be down here today discussing innovative ways to create jobs instead of the need to extend unemployment benefits yet again. But because of this administration and even some of the choices of this body, unfortunately, our economy is not growing quickly enough and many Americans

are still hurting, including a lot of Nevadans.

My State is struggling. I have repeated often on this floor that Nevada consistently tops the chart in unemployment, bankruptcies, and foreclosures. The statistics are surely revealing. But more startling is the obvious increase in impoverished Nevadans whom I meet when I go home. I would like to share an example.

Every Thanksgiving one or two of my children join me in serving Thanksgiving dinner to folks in Reno who are in need and cannot cook a Thanksgiving meal for themselves. This year my daughter Emmy, who is in her freshman year in college, joined me in this experience. Every year that dinner sees more and more attendees. Every year the number of individuals and families who need help increases. This year the venue was absolutely packed. When my daughter and I arrived, the line outside the venue was four blocks long. It is such an obvious example of how so many Nevadans are unable to provide for their basic needs, and this cannot be ignored.

I know many economists point to a national unemployment rate that is improving, but at home we do not feel it. The unemployment rate in Nevada has consistently far exceeded the national average. In fact, the Silver State has led the Nation for the past 3 years in unemployment. The result is, of course, that people in Nevada are really hurting.

It is difficult to stand here in the Nation’s Capital—an area that has largely felt little negative impact of the recession—and describe just how tough times are for so many of my constituents. At these Thanksgiving dinners, I hear about the choices individuals are forced to make—whether to buy gas for their car or pay for heat in the frigid northern Nevada winters or buy school supplies for their children or perhaps save for the future.

These are hard-working individuals who rely on these benefits. They are trying to find jobs. They want to provide for their children. But for these benefits to simply vanish without giving families the time to plan or figure out alternatives to help them get by is just not right.

I too understand the concerns about the cost of these benefits. I would prefer to see them paid for in a manner that does not burden our Nation with more debt. I have previously introduced legislation that would do just that, legislation that would extend unemployment benefits while still paying for them. At the time I introduced my legislation as an alternative to a more costly bill because I think it is important to bring down our Nation’s debt.

I am ready to work with my colleagues to introduce similar legislation again this year, but in the meantime I propose that we pass this short-term extension now. That would allow Congress the opportunity to spend the next 3 months debating how to pay for these