

they will work with us to advance this bill and legislation in the future more expeditiously than we have in the past.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

THE IRS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, just last year, IRS officials and an inspector general report confirmed what we have been hearing from constituents for quite a while: The IRS was being used to target Americans for daring to exercise their first amendment rights, for daring to think differently, for daring to hold opinions contrary to high-ranking government officials. They confirmed that civic groups the administration opposed, including at least one in my home State of Kentucky, were harassed and bullied by the IRS. They confirmed that individuals who supported these groups were intimidated and attacked, and they confirmed something else too—that this happened in the runup to a national election.

So Americans were rightly outraged—outraged—when the worst fears of citizen organizations came to light. The American people rightly expected the Obama administration to take concrete steps to end this harassment once and for all—to put safeguards in place that would ensure the same kind of abuse never, ever happens again.

But that is not what happened. No, in fact, basically, the opposite of that happened. The Obama administration now seems to be trying to legitimize the harassment after the fact, to enact regulations that would essentially allow the IRS to bully and intimidate Americans who exercise their right of free speech. It is something they were originally planning actually to slip by while the harassment was actually still going on.

But here is the thing. The administration knew it could never get anything like that through Congress the democratic way, so it is trying to quietly impose these new regulations through the back door—through the back door—by executive fiat. Administration officials insist the rules change is just a minor bureaucratic adjustment. Nothing to it, they say. They claim it is just a “good government” idea from the IRS—a response to the inspector general report that brought these terrible abuses to light.

Of course, we know that is not true. We know the administration had been working on this proposed rule for at least 2 years—2 years—before the inspector general report came out, and from the looks of things there is nothing “good government” about this at all. As with so much of what we have seen with the Obama administration, it is almost purely political—transparently political.

Under the administration’s proposed regulations, many citizen groups could

be prohibited—prohibited—from participating in some of the most basic civic engagement activities—things such as voter registration, issue advocacy, and educating citizens about candidates before an election. This is just plain wrong. Grassroots groups shouldn’t be persecuted for doing what Americans expect them to do. They shouldn’t be forced to shut up or shut down or for engaging in the very kinds of educational activities that the 501(c)(4) designation was designed to support.

The idea is to shut up and shut down the voices that oppose the administration’s priorities, and it comes on the heels of a long-running pet project of this administration to expose conservative donors to harassment in order to try to dry up their funding.

Americans who care about the First Amendment need to stand up to this regulation before the administration has a chance to finalize it. The American people need to stand up to this regulation before the administration has a chance to finalize it. And they actually are. More than 20,000 citizens have already submitted comments on this proposed rule at regulations.gov. Nearly all the ones I saw were opposed.

In the House, Representative DAVE CAMP has introduced legislation that would prevent the IRS from implementing any such regulation, and next week, I, along with Senator FLAKE, Senator ROBERTS, and others, will introduce companion legislation that would do the same in the Senate.

But I hope it doesn’t have to come to that. There is a much easier fix available. There is a way out of this dilemma. The new commissioner of the IRS, John Koskinen, can put a stop to the rule right now if he chooses. He can stop this right now if he chooses. If he means what he said when the Senate confirmed him—the comments we heard about restoring integrity to the IRS—then he will do just that. The Speaker and I, along with top Senate and House leadership and the leadership of the relevant authorizing and appropriating committees, have just sent a letter to Mr. Koskinen on this topic, and we look forward to his response.

Back in the 1970s, Richard Nixon famously tried to influence the IRS into helping him punish his political opponents. The IRS has been in this spot before. Back then, the IRS commissioner stood up to President Nixon and said, essentially: No, that is not what this agency is supposed to do. So the history is that when a previous IRS commissioner had a President of the United States try to use him to target his political enemies, the Commissioner of the IRS stood up to the President and said no. He said no to the President. The President cannot use the IRS to target the President’s political enemies. That act of courage and independence became the defining act of an already distinguished career, and it was something for which the American taxpayer should be forever grateful.

So, today, Commissioner Koskinen has a similar choice. He can either be remembered as the man who reformed this IRS at a time when Americans were deeply distrustful of it or he can be remembered as the man who allowed himself to be used by the administration for its own political ends. That is the choice.

The bottom line is this. Americans need to be able to trust the IRS again, and that means getting our Nation’s tax agency back into the mission it was designed to perform such as processing tax returns, not regulating free speech. The Obama administration’s proposed rule has almost nothing to do with actual tax policy. It is more about making harassment of its political opponents the official policy of the IRS. That is completely unacceptable. Remember, this is an agency that has access to some of America’s most sensitive personal information: the power to audit, to penalize, to harass—power that is pretty wide-ranging.

So it is not surprising that groups all across the political spectrum, from the ACLU to the Chamber of Commerce, have expressed concerns about this rule.

Let’s be clear. Let’s be perfectly clear. Commissioner Koskinen knows the IRS has no business regulating free speech. He knows that. The eyes of America are on the IRS commissioner. They are counting on him to do the right thing.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION EXTENSION ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1845, which the clerk will report.

The assistant 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. 2714, of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 2715 (to amendment No. 2714), to change the enactment date.

Reid motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Finance, with instructions, Reid amendment No. 2716, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 2717 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 2716), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 2718 (to amendment No. 2717), of a perfecting nature.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 11 a.m. will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. REED. I ask unanimous consent that the time until 2 p.m. be equally divided and controlled between the two

leaders or their designees and that all quorum calls during that time also be equally divided.

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

Mr. REED. Mr. President, in a few hours this Chamber will have the opportunity to restore benefits for 1.7 million American job seekers and help reduce the national deficit by \$1.2 billion. I believe my colleagues understand that this is a fiscally responsible way to help job seekers who are still struggling in the aftermath of the great recession.

Unemployment insurance helps people to look for work while at the same time bolstering consumer demand and supporting the economy, which is why the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated that renewing unemployment insurance for 1 year will save 200,000 jobs.

This is an imperative. We must do it. On behalf of the families who are struggling, on behalf of our economy that needs the support, this is something which must be done.

Now the question is whether we can move this critical bill forward and send help to those who are struggling through no fault of their own. Everyone understands that to qualify for unemployment insurance, they have to be working and they have to lose their job through no fault of their own, and they have to continue to search for work.

The reality in this market is that there are, in many cases, three applicants for every job. We have all heard the stories when we have gone home to our States.

There is a software engineer who worked for 20 years who has put out 300 resumes and who has followed people around to give them resumes. This individual was so persistent in trying to get a job in financial services that he would show up early in the morning and put his resume in the local newspaper for the head of the bank where he was interviewing. That eventually got him a callback, I am told, but not yet a job. It is very difficult.

We can do what we have always done—help these struggling Americans and help our economy.

At every point in this process, I believe we have responded to the issues raised by our colleagues to try to get this done. Instead of a full year of extended unemployment benefits—which I proposed, which we usually do—we compromised on a short-term extension just to get it done because since December 28 people have lost their benefits. They went off a cliff. Every week an estimated 70,000 more Americans lose their benefits. It is up to 1.7 million now, and it will be several million before this year has run out. So instead of a typical 1-year extension, we are asking for 3 months. Most of it or a large part of it is retroactive to make up to those people who lost their benefits beginning on December 28.

I was joined—and I must thank him for his tremendous leadership—by Sen-

ator DEAN HELLER of Nevada. This is a bipartisan effort because this unemployment problem—particularly this long-term unemployment problem—knows no political dimension or geographic dimension or ethnic or gender dimension. It is an American problem, and Senator HELLER and I are responding in a bipartisan way. We put what we thought was a pathway to provide immediate aid to these job seekers and to give us enough time to work through these complex issues many of my colleagues have raised, issues such as, can we make the program, overall, more effective? Can we incentivize individuals to seek employment more efficiently? Can we integrate training? All of those are important issues, but in the context of a 3-month emergency extension, the first thing to do is to get the relief to the people and then sit down and conscientiously and deliberately work on the details.

When this concession on the short-term extension wasn't enough to break the filibuster, Democrats put forth another proposal, again after consultation with our Republican colleagues. I thank Senator HELLER, Senator COLLINS, Senator PORTMAN, Senator COATS, and many others who consciously and conscientiously provided thoughts, provided input, et cetera. So this process was not "my way or the highway." This was trying to find a bipartisan pathway, and we are still searching.

Based on those comments, we proposed a fully paid-for extension of unemployment insurance. We started off with 11½ months fully paid for. We used the pay-for that would have been an extension of the mandatory savings agreed to in the bipartisan budget agreement, which had been endorsed by House Budget Committee chairman PAUL RYAN. We also included in that proposal, the long-term proposal, a major policy change proposed by Senator PORTMAN addressing overlapping unemployment and disability insurance payments. None of these were easy to accept on our side.

The tradition has been unpaid-for unemployment extensions. Very few times have we paid for these benefits because they are considered emergency spending. This is an emergency. People are struggling out there. But we accepted the premise which our Republican colleagues suggested that this has to be paid for. Then we also accepted the premise that we couldn't pay for it with tax revenues. It would have to be paid for with something else. So we took a proposal that was embedded in the budget and we tried to use that together with a proposal that was first presented by Senator PORTMAN. But we had a vote, a cloture vote, and none of our Republican colleagues supported it.

Then we had a vote on the underlying measure, the short-term extension, the 3-month extension unpaid-for offered by Senator HELLER and me—Senator HELLER joined us on that vote, and I thank him for that—but we still did not have the significant number of Re-

publican colleagues necessary not only to move this measure forward but also to do the right thing.

We are here today and we have had another round of extensive discussions, consultations, and we are now about to pay for a 3-month extension of unemployment benefits. Some of it is retroactive, all of it is fully paid for. I will point out that it is February and this extension will go forward until March. We are reaching the point, ironically, where we might have more retroactive payments than prospective payments. That is why we have to move and we have to move today.

It is not everything we wanted, certainly. As I said initially, we would have preferred a full year to give people certainty for the year. We would have, as we have done more times than not, declared it emergency spending. But in order to conscientiously and thoughtfully and cooperatively and collaboratively work with our colleagues, we have continually agreed to make concessions. I used to think that was the nature of political compromise, principled political compromise, and we have tried.

Now we have a 3-month bill that is paid for by a technique called pension smoothing, which we have enacted on a bipartisan basis. In fact, the vote was 79 to 19 in the 2012 Transportation bill, MAP-21. So this is not a controversial pay-for. This is something we have embraced before. It is something that does not involve raising revenues, which is one of the benchmarks our colleagues laid down. So we have a short-term, fully paid-for UI benefit which can go out immediately to people who are suffering and which is paid for by a non-controversial mechanism.

Essentially, it will do what I think we have been requested to do by our colleagues on the other side. Our request is simply, support us in this effort so that we can get this legislation accomplished.

One of the interesting things about this pay-for is that not only is it in the Transportation bill—due to expire, and we will extend it—but also it has been used on numerous occasions by colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pay for a various assembly of different legislative proposals. So this is not a controversial mechanism. I don't think unemployment insurance is controversial. I think people hopefully recognize that it is necessary in this situation.

We have also included a provision in this proposal that has been championed aggressively and thoughtfully by Senator COBURN that will bar individuals with income of over \$1 million from receiving Federal unemployment insurance benefits. It has passed this Chamber by a vote of 100 to 0.

The other factor which I would argue to my colleagues is that as we pay for this extension, we are also able to approve \$1.2 billion over 10 years to reduce the deficit.

If my colleagues are looking for proposals that are fully paid for, reduce

the deficit, and provide needed assistance to Americans who have worked, are looking for work, and desperately want a job, we need their vote this afternoon. I hope we can move forward on this bill and help unemployed Americans who are searching for work, help employers—this pension-smoothing mechanism helps employers—and also reduce the deficit. That is a very good trifecta, something I think we should support.

The other point I want to make is that the notion that unemployment insurance, Federal long-term benefits, should be a political issue is in stark contrast to its history. Congress has renewed UI on a bipartisan basis in the past on numerous occasions. We did it three times under President Ronald Reagan. We did it five times under President George W. Bush. That is the precedent to get it done today. That is a pretty good precedent on a bipartisan basis under two Republican Presidents.

One of the questions that comes up is does the Republican leadership—not some of the Members whom we have collaborated with very closely—want this to pass or will they say: No, no, forget the substance, it is so compelling. Let's talk about process. This is about how many amendments we have. This is about whether we can reform and reauthorize an entire legislative program based on a 3-month extension—most of which is rapidly becoming more retroactive, than prospective, than going forward.

I think the American people see through this. The substance is clear. This program has been repeatedly reauthorized to deal with long-term unemployment under Republican Presidents and Democratic Presidents on a bipartisan basis. It is fully paid for. It is paid for by a noncontroversial technique that does not include raising revenues. In fact, the pay-for is something the corporate world supports.

There are others who might say we are disappointed because there is another major issue out there, and there is; that is, the COLA cuts for military retirees. This is an issue that has to be dealt with, and it will be dealt with. But, I wish to point out that COLA does not become effective—those reductions—until December of 2015. People receiving UI lost their benefits December of last year. They are already suffering. There is no more time for them, in terms of our fixing it, before it takes effect. We need to act today.

Indeed, it has been estimated there are 20,000 veterans who have been denied long-term unemployment benefits because of our failure to extend this. So for those 20,000 veterans, I don't think it would be sufficient to tell them they are not going to get their unemployment insurance because we are worried about what is going to happen in December of 2015 to other veterans. If we want to help veterans right away, today, we can help 20,000 of them by voting for this provision going forward.

Let us help both the unemployed and our veterans and not try to use one group against the other, for a legislative advantage in terms of any one particular measure. The emergency for unemployment insurance that encompasses at least 20,000 veterans is today, not a year or more from now.

We can't turn our back on 1.7 million Americans, with that number growing each week. We have to help them. It has been 40 days since unemployment insurance benefits expired for millions of Americans. That is 40 days too long for those who were downsized with the recession and now find their unemployment insurance benefits being downsized again by Congress—downsized practically to zero.

I also wish to remind my colleagues about some of the reforms we already accomplished in 2012, because many of my colleagues have some very good ideas and they have talked about, well, if we are going to deal with unemployment insurance, let us deal with it in a way we can also make some structural reforms. In 2012, I was part of the conference committee between the House and the Senate where legislation was formally considered in this body, in the other body, and brought to a conference in regular order and we had a very vigorous debate about the structure of unemployment compensation, and significant structural reforms were made to the program.

This is not a situation where we have neglected to look at the unemployment compensation program for years and years and years. It was 2 years ago we made these changes. We strengthened the job search requirement. We have indeed allowed States, if they choose to, to drug screen applicants, which is an extremely controversial provision. That was included because we were responding to particularly many Members of the House of Representatives who said this had to be something the States can do. Well, this is something the States can do. I don't think most States have taken up the option, but this is something they can do.

Indeed, after the House passed this agreement, Representative CAMP issued a statement noting—in his words—the historic reforms of the Federal unemployment programs are an important part of this agreement. These reforms will now help the unemployed get the training and resources they need to move from an unemployment check to a paycheck. The package overturns arcane 1960s-era regulations and allows States to drug screen and test those most at risk.

I am always willing to listen to proposals to make changes, but we have to recognize we made significant changes to this program, in Mr. CAMP's words—revising provisions that had been there since the 1960s, and that was about 2 years ago. So we have made these changes. But we are willing to work in good faith if additional changes are necessary. However, they shouldn't block a 3-month extension, much of it

retroactive, that is pending before the Senate today.

Let me make one other point. In the context of this debate, there has been the suggestion that unemployment insurance is in some way inappropriate, immoral. It encourages people to avoid work. It makes us, as Americans, lazy and dependent. That is not what I see when I go back home. What I see are people who say—even recognizing my efforts to try to get this bill passed—that is fine, but what I truly want is a job. I want to work. I want to work for many reasons. One, the \$350 a week I get, that barely keeps my family whole. It is a little help for gasoline, a little help with the rent, but I can't live on that. I have to have a job.

By the way, I think most Americans want to work because work defines us. Work gives us not just a place to go but gives meaning to all of us, just as family does. So this notion this is just this program that indulges those who don't want to work is profoundly wrong. Indeed, it is an insult to millions of Americans who desperately want a job.

By definition, unemployment insurance is based on an individual's work history. This is not a program you qualify for by showing up. You have to be let go, basically. You have to be told: We can't keep you anymore. We are sorry. You are a good worker, but we can't keep you. You have to go. In fact, if you are not a good worker, if you are fired for cause, you don't get these benefits. And then they actively have to keep looking for work. As I said, in the 2012 legislative provisions, we gave the States more authority to make that active search much more active, much more real—not perfunctory but an active search.

Because of the obstructions we have seen, most Americans now are just simply eligible for 26 weeks of assistance—the standard program administered by the States. But the Washington Post notes it takes an average job seeker about 32 weeks to get hired, and in some cases even longer because of high unemployment. In my State it is 9.1 percent. There are some States where it is remarkably low because of the particular economic conditions there. But as the Post points out, for the average worker, it is 32 weeks. Those 26 weeks will not cover their unemployment period as they desperately search for work.

The other cruel fact is the longer one is unemployed, the harder it is to get a job. That is what we know from research. That is what we know from our own sense of the economy. So the notion that someone, such as a chemical engineer who has been out of work for 7 months, who has a great work record—the first time he or she has ever lost their job—should take the first thing available to him or her at the lowest cost, the lowest wage, No. 1, I think devalues their lifetime effort; and No. 2, it potentially denies us of their productivity. I would rather see a

chemical engineer work at a job related to chemical engineering than stocking shelves because his productivity, his or her contribution to society, would be much greater doing the job they were trained for and they have the experience to do.

Our Nation is at its best when everyone has the opportunity to put their talents, their skills, and their experience to work. We need to get our country back to full employment. We all know that is the answer. This is an emergency provision, a bridge, if you will, to a job. We have to do more not only to put people back to work but to make the wages they receive allow them to live not just paycheck to paycheck but to live with the sense they are building some security for themselves and their family.

We have the resources to achieve this. We are paying for this provision. We are not putting it on the shoulders of the next generation. We are limiting it to a very short period of time so there is an opportunity to work and look at what we did in 2012 and see if we can do more. The question before us is, Does this Senate have the will to make it happen?

Renewing unemployment insurance isn't the end of our efforts. Our efforts are to get more jobs out there so people don't need unemployment insurance; that it is not 32 weeks to get a new job but is several days, we hope. This is the building block we need to put in place to move forward.

This process, this expiration, has caused Rhode Islanders in my home State great hardship. It is time to end that hardship. So I urge my colleagues to renew this program. This is one of those issues where it simply comes down, in my view, to this: This is the right thing to do. I honestly believe there are many more than 60 of my colleagues who fundamentally believe this is the right thing to do and the right way to do it. The question is, Will they vote that way in a few hours? I hope they do.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. RUBIO. I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized to speak as if in morning business.

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

IRAN SANCTIONS

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I have been receiving a lot of phone calls and emails this week about the issue of Iran. Just last night, almost all of my colleagues on the Republican side and I, led by Senator KIRK, among others, sent a letter to the majority leader

asking him to have a vote on additional sanctions on Iran. Of course, these sanctions would be conditioned on failure of the additional negotiations which the administration has announced will begin next week.

I wish to take a moment to explain to people back home, who are—rightfully so—writing and calling us about this issue, what is at stake and what is happening. So I will break it down to the most basic elements.

Iran is a country which, as we all know, beginning in 1979 was overtaken by a radical Islamic revolution which took control of the country and has been a sworn enemy of the United States ever since. In fact, until very recently—and perhaps they still do—after Friday prayers, they used to end them with the chant “Death to America.”

It is one thing to say those things. It is another to actually do something about it. In fact, Iran has. They have been one of the most active sponsors of terrorism all over this planet but particularly in the Middle East.

We know they are actively engaged in undermining our interests all over the world. They have been linked to terrorist attacks against dignitaries from other countries in other countries abroad. About 2 years ago, a report emerged of the potential that they were trying to plot the assassination of a foreign ambassador here in Washington, DC.

In addition, they participate in things such as cyber attacks against the country, they destabilize their neighbors, and they continue to develop their weapons capability.

In addition to all that which I have just outlined, over the last few years Iran has begun to pursue a nuclear program. In order to have a nuclear weapon, you have to be able to process plutonium. This takes infrastructure, and while people know how to do that per se, it takes a lot of investment of time, energy, and expertise to actually build the facilities to enrich.

You can enrich for peaceful purposes. If you want to have nuclear reactors to power your cities, this requires enrichment up to a certain level. But Iran has gone well beyond that.

This is important for two reasons. The first is that there are plenty of countries in the world who have nuclear energy but don't enrich and don't reprocess. They import that material to use in their reactors. In fact, that is what most countries who have nuclear reactors do.

But the second is that Iran's program has always had strong elements of secrecy. They have had all these secret facilities they hide from the world—and the world is rightfully concerned.

The United Nations Security Council—which is lately usually a pretty useless body, but the United Nations Security Council came up with a resolution demanding that Iran stop the enrichment process. But they kept going. In fact, not so long ago they dis-

covered more secret facilities where Iran was enriching uranium and reprocessing plutonium.

So the administration has made it a high priority, as has its predecessor, to stop that from happening, and they have made clear statements: We are not seeking to contain a nuclear Iran; we want to prevent it. That is the right approach. Now, here is the problem.

We recently entered into these negotiations with Iran to get them to stop, to back away from this. If you want nuclear power, if you want nuclear energy, you can have it without the need to reprocess—like most countries do, like many of our allies do.

The only reason why they even came to the table for those negotiations is because the United States, to be frank—despite the resistance of this administration, which each and every time sanctions and sanctions bills have come before the Congress have threatened to veto them and have blocked them and have been against them—despite all of that, these sanctions have been in place. They have been applied at a global level, and they have created a tremendous amount of pressure on the Iranian economy. As a result, they have come to the table to negotiate—not because the new president, Rouhani, is a reformer, as some like to call him, but because they have so much internal pressure and their economy is under so much duress that they are afraid of what their people may do about it in the long term.

The administration is pretty optimistic about these negotiations which were reached: An interim agreement—a temporary agreement, as they call it. A joint plan of action is the right terminology.

We had Secretary Sherman, who was in charge of those talks, here the other day before the Foreign Relations Committee. Her point is, we accomplished something. We got Iran to stop processing at a certain level and suspend it. That is her point. Now we are going to go into the second phase of negotiating a longer term solution, and we have to give diplomacy a chance.

The problem is that something is lost in translation. Perhaps before the Internet we didn't catch these things, but now we can see these things happening in real-time.

For some reason Iran does not have the same interpretation that the United States does of this joint plan of action.

For example, the head of Iran's atomic energy organization on November 24 said as follows:

Work at the Arak reactor will continue. . . . Research and development will continue. All our exploration and extraction activities will continue. There are no activities that won't continue.

Their foreign minister on November 27 said:

Iran will pursue construction at the Arak heavy-water reactor.

This is the same one I was just talking about.

Iran's top nuclear negotiator said—and this is really concerning:

We can return again to 20-percent enrichment in less than one day, and we can convert the nuclear material again. . . . Therefore, the structure of our nuclear program is preserved . . . we . . . will in no way, never, dismantle our centrifuges.

These are concerning statements. Their foreign minister said something else on CNN on January 22:

We did not agree to dismantle anything. . . . The White House version both underplays the concessions and overplays Iran's commitments . . . we are not dismantling any centrifuges, we're not dismantling any equipment, we're simply not producing, not enriching over 5%.

The problem is that maybe they are not enriching right now. Or, quite frankly, it would be tough to tell because they have always had secret capabilities we keep finding out about long after they have started. But more complicated is that they are keeping all the process and the equipment in place. If they wanted to—as they accurately said—they could return to enriching at whatever level they wanted in less than 1 day.

Now, we may ask ourselves: Why has Iran agreed to do these sorts of things? Here is what I said at the beginning and I know now to be true more than ever. Here is Iran's strategy. It is the same one employed by North Korea a few years ago:

Let's get into a negotiation. Let's see how many of these sanctions we can get lifted off of our shoulders. But let's not agree to anything that is irreversible.

Here is what they are gambling on. They are gambling that the world's attention will turn to something else; that the sanctions will erode and people will lose the discipline or the willingness to continue; that countries who are export driven want to sell things to Iran or get gasoline and petroleum products from them and will therefore agree to not continue with the sanctions.

Then eventually one day, in 1, 2, 3, 4 years or whenever, they can decide to restart this stuff and suddenly announce: We want to be a nuclear weapons power after all.

Do you know why I know—I don't think, I don't suspect—that Iran wants nuclear weapons? There are two reasons.

The first is because they believe this is the ultimate insurance policy. If they have a nuclear weapon, people can't interfere with their internal politics because they are a nuclear power.

The other reason why I know is because they are developing ballistic missiles. Ballistic missiles are rockets that travel at long distances, and they cost a lot of money to develop and a lot of time. The only reason why you develop that capability is to deliver a nuclear payload, to be able to deliver a nuclear weapon against somebody else far away.

The administration's argument is this is all for domestic consumption.

This is all political posturing. This is what the administration is saying in reaction to Iran's top diplomat, who once again yesterday dismissed the Obama administration's demands on its nuclear program.

He said they have no value. The best part of this joint plan of action, he said, is that it is so clear that research and development has no constraint; we can continue research and development and increasing our capabilities; that all stays in place.

What he is really saying is this. Once the world is distracted and America moves to another topic or some other crisis happens somewhere else in the world, then we will do what we want to do.

That is what is happening here, and this is extremely dangerous for the future. Having a nuclear Iran is bad enough, but it isn't going to stop there. If Iran develops a nuclear capability and a nuclear weapon, every other country around them is going to want one as well. Saudi Arabia is going to want one. Potentially, Turkey is going to want one. Eventually, one day Egypt could want one. Could you imagine four or five nuclear weapons powers in the most unstable, dangerous region in the world? This is where we are headed.

What about these countries who don't enrich right now? South Korea is an example. We ask them not to enrich. We tell them: You don't need to enrich. We provide this stuff. How are we going to argue to them not to enrich now? How are we going to tell Jordan and Saudi Arabia and other countries: You shouldn't enrich but we have agreed to allow Iran to keep enriching? So we are going to tell our friends and allies: You can't have this capability; you shouldn't have this capability; but we are going to tell an enemy of this country and of world peace that they can?

This is why we want a vote on these sanctions. We don't have room for error here. We do not have the space to be wrong. We can't afford to be wrong.

There is no guarantee sanctions will prevent Iran from going nuclear, but it will make it extremely painful. It will influence their cost benefit analysis.

Failure to put these sanctions in place is already having an impact. Every day we see news reports of businessmen in Europe and around the world flooding to Iran on the idea sanctions might be eroding. How are we going to pull that back? We won't be able to.

I don't completely dismiss the notions the administration is saying. It is ideal to reach a negotiated solution with Iran. But we have to be wise. We have to learn the lessons of history, and we have to understand human nature. Iran's regime wants a nuclear weapon because it gives them supremacy in the region and they believe it makes them immune to outside pressure and interference in their internal affairs. They are headed for a weapon,

and they are using these negotiations to buy time.

There are 59 Members of this Senate who have signed on to a sanctions bill and one Senator is preventing a vote on it, and that is wrong. We should have a vote on a matter of this importance. The use of procedural motions and the power of the majority leader to prevent a vote on something of this importance has extraordinary long-term implications on our national security.

Let me just close by making one more point in this regard. I recently read statements that those of us who want more sanctions are banging the war drum. That is false. On the contrary. We believe that a failure to put sanctions in place increases the likelihood of an armed conflict with Iran. Are we prepared to allow Iran to become a nuclear weapons power?

We are going into these negotiations with one arm tied behind our back. They are saying: Under no circumstances will we ever agree not to enrich, and we are saying we are open to that.

I am saying this on the floor so that it is recorded and so people know where I stood on this before it happened. If Iran is allowed to maintain any sort of enrichment capability within our lifetime—in fact, I believe before the end of this decade, God forbid—Iran will have a nuclear weapon and one day we will wake up to the news that they have tested a device or proven the capability of having one. When that day comes, God help us all.

I hope we can have a vote on the Senate floor on this issue. Let's have a debate on it. Let's have a frank and open discussion about it. Why are we preventing that from happening? Why is the majority leader preventing that from happening? It is inexcusable. It is unacceptable.

I hope we will have a vote on it sooner rather than later.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, yesterday the Congressional Budget Office reported—and it continues to be the buzz about town—the latest report known as the long-term outlook. Of course, we know from the news that its report on the Affordable Care Act is absolutely devastating.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, ObamaCare will reduce full-time employment by 2 million workers in the year 2017 and 2.5 million by the year 2024. The reason for that is pretty clear. With the employer mandate and the additional cost associated with ObamaCare, many employers will simply put people from full-time work onto part-time work in order to avoid the employer mandate and those penalties and additional costs.

We human beings are enormously sensitive to incentives—both positive and negative—and this is predictable, and it is tragic. The Congressional

Budget Office says: The reduction will almost entirely be a reduction in labor force participation and in the number of hours worked.

In other words, this was a piece of legislation that we were told would enormously benefit, not only individual Americans by getting them access to care, but the President said it would benefit the economy as a whole. The sad truth is it is hurting the economy and hurting the very people whom I presume the President wanted to help.

I heard Representative RYAN on the news talk about this as a poverty trap. Of course, many of the folks who supported the Affordable Care Act—and I am thinking about organized labor—have petitioned the President and his allies and said: This is turning into a nightmare for us. This is one of the things they mentioned—people are being moved from full-time work to part-time work.

I might just add, the answer is not to say: We are just going to order an increase of 40 percent in the minimum wage. In other words, you can see that moving people from 40 hours a week to 30 hours a week—perhaps there will be some people who say we will compensate for that. We will order businesses to pay at least \$10.10 an hour, when simple common sense tells us that many of the people, again, whom we are trying to help, are the ones who will be hurt the most with high unemployment among minorities and teenagers.

What is a small business going to do when the government orders them to pay \$10.10 an hour without regard to the markets or economics? They are going to hire fewer people or perhaps go out of business. This sort of micro-management and attempts to compensate for the effects of ObamaCare will make things worse, not better.

Needless to say, if the advocates of the Affordable Care Act had understood back in 2009 and 2010 what the facts would turn out to be today, then ObamaCare never would have passed. Millions of Americans said they liked the coverage they already had.

I think the poll numbers I have seen showed between 88 percent to 90 percent of the people said: We like what we have. We would like it to be more affordable, but we like the coverage we have. If these people knew they were going to have their coverage canceled because it failed to meet the mandates of ObamaCare, ObamaCare never would have passed.

The people who liked the coverage they had would still be paying lower premiums than they are being charged in the exchanges under ObamaCare, not to mention the huge deductibles. Families are now being asked to essentially self-insure up to \$5,000 for their deductible. They can say you get the tax subsidy and you have better coverage beyond that, but you still have a \$5,000 deductible, and those are the first dollars that come out of consumers' pock-

ets. You might as well be self-insured but for catastrophic health care needs. Of course, there is a much cheaper way for people to buy that kind of coverage.

We also know an untold number of Americans would have access to at least 40 hours of work, which is not the case, sadly. Under ObamaCare—and we now know because of the projections of the Congressional Budget Office—things will continue to get worse.

The President's health care law has become a genuine public policy disaster. By the way, even the Congressional Budget Office said at least 30 million people will still be uninsured even if ObamaCare was implemented exactly as advertised. So not even that addresses what I always thought was the main reason for ObamaCare; that is, to cover more people.

ObamaCare is reducing full-time employment at a time when the percentage of people participating in job seeking—the workforce—is at a historic low. Many people have given up. They just quit looking, and they get dropped out of the unemployment statistic. So when the number comes down—and we actually think maybe we are doing better and maybe the economy is stronger. We found out, for example, in December alone that 345,000 people quit looking for jobs. They quit. They got worn out. They gave up because they have been looking for so long and the jobs just are not there.

To be clear, the question in 2009 and 2010 was not whether we would expand health coverage but how we would do it. ObamaCare represented one option, and it is obviously the one our Democratic colleagues chose to adopt on a party-line vote. Despite what the President suggested, yet again, in his State of the Union Message, there are a lot of options out there, so it is not ObamaCare or nothing, which is what is so often mentioned.

I hear some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle say: We have to have ObamaCare because only then can we cover people with preexisting conditions. That is poppycock. It is not true. We can do it cheaper and more effectively by other alternatives.

We hear people say: The only way young people can be covered up to age 26 is under their family's health care with ObamaCare. That is poppycock too. It is just not true. To suggest that you have to basically have the whole enchilada—you have to buy all of ObamaCare, which is trillions of dollars, along with all of its negative consequences—in order to address these health care concerns is false. It is not true.

If I heard the President say this one time, I heard him say it 1,000 times. He said: If critics of ObamaCare have a better idea, just bring it to me.

I would like to respectfully suggest that the President has a tin ear when it comes to alternatives and he is not listening.

One of the latest proposals came out of three of our best experts on the Re-

publican side on the health care issue: Senator ORRIN HATCH, the ranking member of the Finance Committee, Senator RICHARD BURR, and Senator Dr. TOM COBURN. They released a comprehensive blueprint for what our alternative might look like.

At some point there has to be a resolution because policies are being canceled. The costs for people with coverage are going up, and it is hurting the economy. It is turning full-time work into part-time work. At some point—I don't know when it is. Maybe it will be sometime after the November election. I am just guessing. At some point we will have to confront this reality and deal with it in order to protect our constituents, the people we are privileged to represent.

The alternative to the government's takeover and the President's command and control—one-sixth of our economy—under ObamaCare is that the government gets to choose, and under our alternative you get to choose.

I wish to highlight a few more of the findings in the Congressional Budget Office report. Last March the President told ABC News that "for the next 10 years [America's national debt] is going to be in a sustainable place." I am afraid the President is falling in a trap because we are living in a surreal time when interest rates are so low because of what the Federal Reserve is doing that, yes, the interest we have to pay on our debt is not as much as it would be if it went back up to historical norms—4 or 5 percent.

By the way, somebody is going to have to pay that back someday. These young people who are sitting here and listening will be the ones left holding the bag, as well as people such as my two daughters who are working in Austin, TX. Somebody is going to have to pay that money back.

For the President to say our debt is sustainable for the next 10 years ignores the fact that we have a moral obligation to deal with it today so as not to dampen the aspiration of these young people by saddling them with a bunch of debt they didn't charge up.

The fact is our debt is highly contingent on three factors: the economic growth of our economy—how fast our economy is growing; inflation is the second one; and interest rates, which I alluded to.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, if America's real economic growth rate were just one-tenth of a percentage lower than it projects currently each year over the next decade, our cumulative debt—the annual difference between what we collect in taxes and what the Federal Government spends over the next 10 years—would go up by \$311 billion. That is with a "b."

Likewise, if annual inflation was 1 percentage point above what the Congressional Budget Office projects, our cumulative deficit—in other words, the difference between what we bring in, in tax dollars and what the Federal Government spends projected over 10

years—would be \$762 billion higher. That is just inflation. Just minor changes in the growth rate or in inflation can have dramatic consequences in terms of the debt. Yes, you don't have to just pay the principle back, you have to pay the interest on that debt.

As I said, interest rates are at historic lows because of the quantitative so-called easing that the Federal Reserve is doing—churning out dollars. Of course it has been a boon to the stock market and the top 1 percent of our economy. Working people are finding their wages have been stagnant for the last 5 years. If interest rates were to rise 1 percentage point above the current Congressional Budget Office baseline each year, our cumulative deficits or our debt would go up \$1.5 trillion—that is with a “t”, not a “b”—\$1.5 trillion.

So these numbers confirm that despite the short-term deficit reduction produced by the Budget Control Act—we have seen some bending of the spending curve under the Budget Control Act; and, of course, those caps have been lifted as a result of the budget negotiations between Senator MURRAY and Congressman RYAN—America is still dangerously vulnerable to a fiscal shock. We experienced one of those back in 2008, and we are still vulnerable to a fiscal shock, if things change in terms of growth, inflation, and interest rates. Any one of those could have a dramatic impact, making things much more difficult and much worse.

To quote the Congressional Budget Office once again: Over the next decade, debt held by the public will be significantly greater relative to GDP than at any time since just after World War II.

Coming out of a world war, we can understand why the debt was high, but debt held by the public will be significantly greater relative to the economy than at any time since that time, and we haven't had a comparable world war that would justify this huge runup of debt.

They went on to say:

With debt so large, Federal spending on interest payments alone will increase substantially as interest rates rise to more typical levels.

I mentioned that.

Going on, they say:

Moreover, because Federal borrowing generally reduces national savings, the capital stock and wages will be smaller than if the debt was lower.

That is what they call the “crowding out effect.” So if the Federal Government is borrowing all of this money, it makes it harder and more expensive for the private sector to do the borrowing they need, and there is a crowding-out effect and a depressing effect on economic growth.

America's massive debt is already hurting our economy. It is exacerbating the already difficult situation that people are experiencing when they are looking for work and they can't

find work, and the problem will get worse, not better, as time goes by because we have seen the difference inflation, growth, and interest rates can have, which can allow this to spiral out of control. That doesn't even address the other concerns many of us have about the unsustainability of Medicare and Social Security. These are sacred promises we made to our seniors; that those programs would be there for them once they reach a qualifying age, and they will not be, on the current track. These young people, I doubt any of them believe Social Security or Medicare will be there for them. We have a way to deal with that today if we will simply take advantage of that opportunity.

I wish to note that every single Member of the Republican caucus has co-sponsored a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. I hear it from Members of my own party who have said: You guys weren't all that great when you were in charge; you guys spent money we didn't have, and that is true. We were pikers by comparison, because back in 1997, the debt was \$5.3 trillion—\$5.3 trillion in 1997. That was the last time we had a vote in the Senate on a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, and we came within one vote of passing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. But today the debt is \$17 trillion-plus—\$17.2 trillion. The President says our debt is on a sustainable path. It is not true. It is whistling past the graveyard and it is endangering our prosperity and our opportunity, not only for the younger generation but for people today who want to find work and want to provide for their families and pursue their version of the American dream.

We can't defy the laws of fiscal gravity forever, and we can't expect to keep piling up debt without damaging our economy.

I expect next week Senator SANDERS of Vermont will bring a bill to the floor ostensibly to help our veterans—something we all support—but which is unpaid for and would add roughly \$25 billion—at least \$25 billion—to the national debt. We just can't keep doing this day after day without enormous risk.

I see my colleague from New Hampshire on the floor, so I will close with this thought: Here are the sad facts since President Obama took office in January of 2009—admittedly coming off of a fiscal crisis at a very bad place for our economy. This is his record over the last 5 years: The number of long-term unemployed has increased by close to 1.2 million people—increased—and the labor force participation rate I mentioned a moment ago has fallen by 2.9 percent. There are 2.9 percent fewer Americans actually looking for work today than there were in January of 2009.

Here is another sad statistic: Since January 2009, the average amount of time the unemployed have been with-

out a job has nearly doubled. People have doubled the time they have been out of work, looking for work, since January 2009, rising from 19.8 weeks to 37 weeks.

The number of people on food stamps has increased by 48.3 percent, reaching 37.4 million people in October. In 2008, the total cost of the Food Stamp Program—something we all support as a safety net program for the most vulnerable—but we spent \$37 billion in 2008, and now it has more than doubled to almost \$80 billion. This is under President Obama's 5 years in office.

The number of people receiving Social Security disability has increased from 7.4 million people to 8.9 million. Meanwhile, the total number of Social Security disability beneficiaries, including spouses and children of disabled workers receiving benefits, has increased from 9.3 million to roughly 11 million.

This is not the way it is supposed to be. I know everyone who is out of a job wants a job and the dignity and the self-respect that comes with it. Certainly we need to protect people who are at risk of falling through the safety net, but more than anything we need to give them the opportunity to get back to work and to provide for their family, put food on the table. We can't be content with the status quo, with huge amounts of money being spent on disability, huge amounts of money being spent on food stamps, and huge amounts of money being paid to people who can't even find a job.

We have to get our economy growing again so these folks can lift themselves up and get back in the workforce and provide for their families and pursue their dreams.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I came to the floor because later today the Senate will vote on a short-term extension of emergency unemployment benefits for thousands of citizens in New Hampshire—hundreds of thousands; really over 1 million throughout the country—who are being hurt right now by our failure to act to extend unemployment benefits.

I have heard from a number of New Hampshire constituents since the unemployment insurance extension expired back in December. They make the case much more eloquently than I can about why we need to extend these unemployment benefits. I will read some excerpts from some of those letters.

One of my constituents is a 62-year-old woman from Windham, and she explained that despite her best efforts she will be one of the many long-term unemployed without any unemployment benefits if she doesn't find a job by March. She began working at age 8 delivering papers with her brother. She put herself through college and earned a master's degree with the help of her employer. She wrote:

I am not too proud to do any honest job. I am losing my house and can't afford to pay my mortgage any longer. There are so many of us out there.

Another woman from Windham wrote to me. She is 55 years old. She has held a job since she was 16. Last August, she was laid off in a merger. She has been actively seeking a job in her field, which is health care. She explained that her unemployment check has helped her pay for her essential living expenses. She and her sister take care of their 90-year-old parents in their home, and this income is critical not just to her livelihood but to the care of her parents.

Then we heard from a 58-year-old woman from Merrimack who learned she lost her job in May of 2013 and has had nine interviews but no offers. Without unemployment assistance, she will not be able to afford her car payment, her mortgage, food or utilities.

A constituent wrote to me explaining that after 29 years as a teacher, that teaching job has been eliminated. She has been on unemployment since June. She has applied for nearly 100 jobs. Think about just getting up every day, trying to figure out where you can apply to just have a shot at getting back to work. Her savings are exhausted. She is on the verge of losing her house since her unemployment benefits—her only source of income—have expired. She wrote:

This seems unfair to me. Having worked hard and been a taxpayer into the system all my working life, I fail to see how not extending benefits will be beneficial to me and the 1.3 million other Americans, especially in light of an already fragile economy. Please do your best to remember those of us who never planned to have to depend on unemployment for this long, but who have fallen victims to these times.

Then I did a tele-townhall conference on Monday night. I heard from thousands of people across New Hampshire. One of the people I heard from was a woman named Kathy from Danbury. She told me she had worked since she was 14 and she is now out of a job. Her unemployment benefits have expired and she doesn't know what she is going to do.

We need to think about Kathy and all of the people whom we are hearing from in our offices. We are supposed to represent the people who need help across this country. My constituents are exactly right. We are threatening the fragile economic recovery by failing to extend unemployment insurance.

The Economic Policy Institute estimates that the expiration of unemployment insurance is going to cost the economy an additional 310,000 jobs. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that each dollar we spend on extending unemployment insurance generates about \$1.50 in economic growth. We learned this week that failing to act has already drained more \$2.2 billion from the economy, including \$1.8 million from New Hampshire, not to mention all of the people whose personal

stories are tragic because they want to work, they are out of a job through no fault of their own, and we need to provide them some assistance while they try and get back on their feet, so they do not lose their homes, so they do not lose their cars, so they can put food on their tables.

I urge my colleagues to come together today. It is time for us to act, to support an extension of unemployment insurance. I certainly hope we are going to do that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Pennsylvania and I be permitted to engage in a colloquy as in morning business.

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

SMALL BUSINESS TAX CERTAINTY AND GROWTH ACT

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, the ongoing debate on unemployment compensation shines a spotlight on the underlying problem; that is, extremely sluggish job growth in our still-lagging economy. Putting people to work is my number one goal.

As American families continue to struggle to get the jobs they need at the wages they deserve, it is more important than ever for Members on both sides of the aisle to come together on legislation to promote economic growth and job creation. Today, I am pleased to join my good friend and colleague Mr. CASEY to discuss our legislation to do exactly that: the Small Business Tax Certainty and Growth Act, which we introduced last year. Our bipartisan legislation focuses on areas of consensus that both parties can embrace to rekindle opportunity by helping small employers start up or grow and create or add good-paying jobs.

It is often said that small businesses are our Nation's job creators, and the data bear that out. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, small businesses generated 65 percent of the net new jobs that were created between 1993 and 2009. Together, America's small businesses employ nearly half of our Nation's workers and generate half of our Nation's GDP.

Even the smallest employers have a huge impact on our economy; 18 percent of all private-sector employees work for businesses with fewer than 20 workers.

Senator CASEY and I recognize that employers cannot grow and add jobs unless they have the money to invest in building and expanding their businesses. That is why our bill focuses on making it easier for them to plan their capital investments and aims to reduce the burden and uncertainty of taxation, all in the name of creating jobs.

Let me explain a few of the provisions of our bill.

First, let me start by stating the obvious: Starting a new business that can

hire workers costs money. Our bill eases the tax burden on new employers by permanently doubling the deduction for start-up expenses from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

There are two other provisions in our bill that affect employers both large and small that we propose to extend: first, the so-called bonus depreciation, and second, the 15-year depreciation for improvements to restaurants and retail facilities. Unfortunately, these important provisions were allowed to expire at the end of last year, causing great uncertainty and thus discouraging investment and the creation of jobs.

Just think about this: The law has reverted to a provision that says that a restaurant has to depreciate its renovations over 39 years. Can you imagine a restaurant waiting to renovate only once every 39 years because it is going to take that long to write off, to depreciate the cost? The 15-year depreciation schedule for improvements is far more realistic.

Our bill also provides certainty for small employers who use section 179 of the tax code. That is the small business expensing provision. Recent studies by the National Federation of Independent Business, NFIB, which has endorsed our bill, show that the constant changes in the tax code are among the top concerns of small business owners. Indeed, I think the Senator from Pennsylvania and I have both found in talking to smaller employers in our States that they are yearning for some certainty in tax policy. They simply cannot deal with a tax code where one year the deduction is at one level, and the very next year it is uncertain whether Congress is going to renew the provision or let it expire.

The level of expensing allowed under section 179 has been unpredictable from year to year, and has changed four times in the past 7 years. This uncertainty makes it difficult or even impossible for small employers to take full advantage of this tax incentive in their long-term investment planning. Our bill would fix this problem by making the maximum expensing allowable under this section permanent at \$250,000 and indexing it for inflation. We also expand the ability of small employers to use simplified methods of accounting.

Let me give a real-life example of what the small business expensing and the bonus depreciation provisions can mean. Last year I spoke with Rob Tod, the founder of Allagash Brewing Company, which is based in Portland, ME. Allagash makes some of the best craft beer in the country. In fact, Maine is known for its craft beers. Well, Rob's operation started out as a one-man show in 1995. In the 19 years since, it has grown into a firm that employs approximately 65 people and distributes craft beer throughout the United States.

Rob noted to me that his company's ability to expand was fueled in part by bonus depreciation and section 179 expensing. New to the craft beer business,

Rob had difficulty obtaining financing on favorable terms, but these cost recovery provisions allowed him to pay less in taxes in the years he acquired the equipment needed to expand his business. Those tax savings were then reinvested in his business, thus creating jobs.

Just think about that. What a difference these provisions made to this company, which has gone from a one-man operation to employing 65 people. This economic benefit is multiplied when you consider the effect of Allagash's investment on the equipment manufacturers, the transportation companies needed to haul new equipment to his brewery, the increased inventory, and the suppliers of the materials needed to brew additional beer.

We are all too familiar with the litany of polls showing how little faith the American people have in their elected leaders and how much they want us to work together to solve our Nation's problems.

I have been privileged to work with Senator CASEY to do exactly that. The legislation that we have introduced is neither a Republican nor a Democratic proposal. It is, instead, a bipartisan plan to help spur America's economy, to assist our small employers, and, most of all, to create good-paying jobs. I urge my colleagues to support our bipartisan bill. I would ask our leadership to bring this legislation to restore economic growth and job opportunity to the Senate floor for action as soon as possible.

I yield to my colleague from Pennsylvania for his remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I first want to commend and salute the work that has been done already on this legislation by the senior Senator from Maine and for her leadership. Senator COLLINS appropriately focused on the issue of jobs and jobs creation.

I know in our State at present we are finally below the half million unemployed number. We went many months where the unemployment rates went as high as 550,000 people. It went down, but it hovered around half a million people for far too many months. We are below that. Now we are at about 443,000. That is still a big number—below 7 percent but just by a little bit.

So job creation has to be job one for me and for most of us if not all of us in the Senate. If that is the reality, that our No. 1 obligation is job creation, we have to be able to show the people we represent that we are doing something about it. We cannot do much of anything unless we can get bipartisan cooperation. That is why I am so grateful Senator COLLINS has been willing to work with me on this legislation and to move it forward and to come together as a team to say to both of our leaders that we want to have legislative action on this bill this year.

The reasons are pretty fundamental. If you have run a small business, you

know what we are talking about. But even if you have not, even if you have not had that experience, you have encountered the challenges that small business owners face. In some cases it is not just challenges; it is real anxiety and worry that is compounded by uncertainty.

There is uncertainty created by what does not happen in Washington or what does happen. When you shut the government down, that creates not just uncertainty but more than that. But there is also uncertainty when they do not see action here to bring the sides together. I am sure the Presiding Officer, who served as mayor of a big city, knows what it is like to talk to small business owners and to hear about their struggles, which have been especially acute in this very tough economy.

One part of their struggle is that even if they can identify the problem and even maybe the solution to rectify the problem, they cannot hire a team of accountants or lawyers or tax professionals or consultants to help them. They often have to do these things on their own. Giving them some measure of certainty as it relates to tax policy would help enormously.

So that is why we came together on the bill, the Small Business Tax Certainty and Growth Act. Senator COLLINS outlined some of the provisions. Let me just go through a couple of them by way of either reiteration or reemphasis.

One she mentioned is the 15-year depreciation, what is sometimes referred to as the 15-year straight line depreciation schedule for restaurants. Why would we go back to the old policy which was that you had to get your increment—or piece of benefit I would call it—of depreciation in little slices over 39 years.

Why not keep it at 15 years so that business owners know in each of those 15 years they are going to have a negative depreciation. It is a more realistic reflection of the useful economic life of the qualifying asset. It makes all the sense in the world to have that in place.

Senator COLLINS also mentioned faster cost recovery that is reflected directly in a company's bottom line. It frees up cash that can be used to expand business operations and hire new workers. These tax provisions can actually allow folks to have the capacity to hire new workers. This is especially important in the restaurant industry which supports—get this number—535,000 jobs in Pennsylvania alone. That number is 13.5 million jobs nationwide in the restaurant industry.

A study by the National Restaurant Association found that uncertainty about depreciation—the very thing we are talking about—and other tax provisions forced restaurants to forego improvement projects that would have produced around 200,000 jobs nationwide. So just one provision about one type of uncertainty could unleash substantial job creation.

Secondly, the maximum allowable deduction, the so-called 179 expensing. Again, why should a business that is already under tremendous pressure to meet a bottom line, to be able to deliver a product or a service, and has all of those pressures—why should that business not have the certainty to know that this year and next year and for as long as they are in business, they can depend upon, rely upon a deduction level that is set at \$250,000 instead of fluctuating as that number has fluctuated.

So making that deduction permanent is critically important. This section, this so-called section 179, allows taxpayers to fully deduct certain capital asset purchases in the year that they make the purchase. This type of extension provides an important incentive for businesses to make capital investments. We want them to make those investments. But we cannot just say to them: Go ahead and make that investment, and we hope we can help you in some uncertain way.

We need to tell them that the rules of the road are going to be much more certain. That is the one provision that we believe should be made permanent.

The deduction under this section 179 has changed three times in the past 6 years. This unpredictably makes it difficult for businesses to plan, for obvious reasons, and neutralizes much of the impact. It is not worth much if you are not sure it is going to be in place the next year. So by making it permanent and indexing it to inflation is a very important point.

By indexing it, the bill provides the kind of certainty that businesses need to take full advantage so that they can hire more workers—just what we are hoping they will do and just what we hope we can help them do.

A third provision, the so-called bonus depreciation, would help small businesses in much the same way as the expensing rules I just talked about. The bonus depreciation allows companies to expense half the cost. Imagine that—half the cost of qualifying assets that they buy and put into service in the same year. It provides an added incentive. Again, that word is important because we try to put Tax Code provisions in place that incentivize the kinds of actions that lead to job growth.

Here are two studies I will cite quickly. In a 2013 report the U.S. Treasury Office of Tax Analysis concluded that this particular provision, the 50-percent bonus depreciation policy, increased small business investment by 31.2 percent between 2008 and 2009. Whether you count that as 2 or 3 years, it is a rather short time period. That provision alone, that bonus depreciation, increased small business investment by more than 31 percent.

A separate report from the same department, the Treasury Department, said that this provision lowered the cost of capital by 44.1 percent. So no matter how you measure it, this bonus

depreciation policy works. It creates jobs, and it will keep working if we put it in place and provide added incentive.

Two more provisions on deductions for start-up expenses are very important. In the accounting rules—we have heard this for years—just by doubling that threshold level for one particular type of accounting and allowing firms to have more leeway with those accounting rules, they will have much more certainty and a much better policy.

In 2010, another study by the Kauffman Foundation found that start-ups and young firms were responsible for most of the job growth in our economy, creating 3 million jobs per year on average.

So when you add up all of this, it is really about common sense. I do not say that in a theoretical way. We know these provisions work. We are certain of that. There is no dispute that each of those policies is directly responsible for substantial job growth. So that is the first thing we know. Second, we know they are supported across the board by both parties.

Every Member of the Senate, even the newest Members, at one time or another has either voted for one of these provisions or supported it. So it makes sense in terms of the dynamic of how to get bipartisan legislation done here. We should put ourselves as best we can to stand, so-called, in the shoes of others. We should try to stand in the shoes of small business owners, try to understand what they are up against, and try to understand some of the pressures they face.

One of the most difficult problems they face is something as simple as uncertainty. Putting these provisions in place would remove a substantial degree of uncertainty. If we can do that, they can unleash job creation the likes of which we probably have not seen in the last couple of years.

I am grateful that Senator COLLINS was willing to work with me to move forward with this bipartisan legislation which will be an effective and a proven creator of jobs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I want to commend the Senator from Pennsylvania for his remarks. I think it is obvious that both of us have reached out to employers in our States and asked them what would make a difference. What would allow you to create new jobs, preserve the ones you have, and pay your workers more?

To a person, they identified provisions in the Tax Code, the uncertainty that occurs when they expire, the difficulty to plan and to hire new workers when you do not know what the Tax Code is going to be. That formed the basis for our bipartisan bill. We listened to what employers were telling us. I hope more of our colleagues will help us bring this bill to the Senate floor.

Every day that I am talking to an employer in Maine, I am asked: Are the provisions that expired at the end of last year going to be renewed? Will they be retroactive? Can we count on them?

They put their hiring plans on hold until we give them the certainty that they deserve. So, again, it has been a great honor to work with my colleague. I do urge our leaders to bring this important bill to the Senate floor.

Madam President, I do have another statement that I would like to give seeing no one seeking the Senate floor. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes as in morning business.

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

TRIBUTE TO RUSSELL CURRIER

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, the world's best athletes have come together in Sochi, Russia, for the 22nd Winter Olympic Games. Among them is Russell Currier, from the small northern Maine town of Stockholm. It is in Aroostook County. It is very near Caribou where I grew up. I rise today to celebrate the determination, hard work, and community spirit that enables Russell Currier to represent our great country in the Olympic Games.

Russell competes in the biathlon, the demanding and increasingly popular sport that combines cross-country skiing with sharpshooting. He secured his place on America's team by winning three out of four qualifying races in January at the U.S. biathlon Olympic trials.

But Russell's snow-covered trail to Russia began long before that. Fourteen years ago, as a seventh grader, he joined the local Nordic skiing program. A former coach described him as a quiet youngster with no particular interest in the sport.

That quickly changed. The next year, Russell won a county-wide middle school championship. The year after that, he won third place at the junior nationals. Caring coaches and encouraging teammates lit a fire in him that burns so brightly today.

On Russell's personal profile on the U.S. Olympic Team Web site, he wrote that his favorite quote is, "Less talking, more doing." He has embraced that motto with all of his strength, and his perseverance has turned his Olympic dream into a goal he has achieved.

I have a particular rooting interest in Russell's success. He and his parents, Debbie and Chris, are graduates of Caribou High School, as am I. Debbie and I grew up spending summers at Madawaska Lake at camps that were very near each other, and we spent endless summers playing together. I have known this wonderful family for many years, and I am thrilled for them. While the world watches the Winter Olympics, the entire population of Aroostook County and indeed of all of Maine will be riveted to the biathlon competition.

As the name suggests, the town of Stockholm, ME, was settled by Swed-

ish immigrants. When the first 21 families came to Aroostook County in the 1870s, they brought with them an unsurpassed work ethic, a strong sense of community, and a love of skiing. In fact, the entire ski industry of Maine, both Nordic and alpine, can be traced to these hardy, outdoors-loving newcomers.

Nearly a century and a half later, the work ethic and the love of skiing remains strong, and the sense of community is more powerful than ever. When Russell won his place on the U.S. team, friends and neighbors held a fundraiser, a spaghetti dinner at Caribou High School, serving up more than 300 spaghetti dinners so Russell's parents, Debbie and Chris, could make the long and expensive trip to Russia to cheer on their son.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article the local newspaper, the Aroostook Republican, published on the community's support behind the Currier family.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Aroostook Republican]

BENEFIT SUPPER SENDS CURRIERS TO SOCHI (By Theron Larkins)

CARIBOU.—By now, Russell Currier is a household name for residents all over Aroostook County and Sunday night was a time to congratulate and support his family, as many County residents attended a benefit supper held at the Caribou High School.

The goal of the event was to raise enough money through donations to send Russell's parents to Sochi, Russia, where they will soon be able to watch their son compete for Olympic gold. Thanks to hundreds, who came from all over Aroostook County to attend the benefit, well over \$6,000 was raised to send Debbie and Chris Currier to the Sochi Winter Games.

There were a number of students, teachers and community members who volunteered at the event. Whether volunteers were serving food, taking donations, or playing piano in the background, the towns of greater Caribou were well represented, as citizens came to show their support and appreciation for the pride Russell has brought to the region.

One Stockholm resident, who came out to show his support was Russell's former coach and director of competitive programs for Maine Winter Sports Center, Will Sweetser, Sweetser coached Russell since junior high, but he certainly recognized Russell's success was aided by much more than just his coach, es.

"They say it takes a community to raise an athlete, and I think you can really see that in this room today," said Sweetser.

Currier, who is already training for the Winter Games, in Italy, could not be in attendance at the supper, due to the rigorous schedule typical of any Olympic athlete. However, that didn't hinder the community's reminiscing. Friends and family stayed well beyond the supper's two-hour allotted time to eat and share their stories about a young Russell, as they watched a slideshow of photos capturing the native son not only on the slopes, but in a number of candid moments, as well.

"A lot of people I've seen here tonight, throughout Russell's entire career, have given pretty selflessly and everyone is really excited to see him reach this point," said Sweetser.

As Sweetser pointed out, a large number came out to back the Currier family during this hectic time. The last few weeks have been overwhelming for all of us, as Debbie Currier, told many attendees, but the community coming together in such a way has undoubtedly helped cope with the stress.

"It's wonderful, it really is," said Debbie. "I see all the faces who have come out to support us, a lot of the parents who had children that grew up playing sports with either my daughter or Russell, they've all just been so supportive over the years. Since this whole thing started we've been able to go to all the venues in different towns and meet all the people who are part of the skiing community, and it's really awesome that so many came," she added.

When asked how special it would be for Russell to have his parents able to attend such a major event, Debbie's reply may not have been what would expect.

"Well, in the beginning he didn't really want us to come. That's why, originally, we didn't have plans to go," she said. "But, I wanted to go so badly. I think he's kind of worried. We are not travelers. We've never been to any of his races outside of Maine and New Brunswick, so our very first event to go to in Europe will be the Olympics, and it's in Russia at a time when things are so unsettled."

The concern over the last few weeks in relation to continuous terrorist threats, in Russia, may be worrisome for many, but 10,000 Americans are still expected to make their way to snowy Sochi for the event. A spate of suicide bombings and jihadist threats during the last months have left potential travelers wary of attending the Winter Games but Russian and American security forces are vehemently working to put minds at ease.

Many precautions are being taken, not only by Vladimir Putin's specially assigned task forces, but the U.S. will also deploy two Navy ships to the Black Sea to evacuate Americans should an incident occur.

The concerns regarding safety at the upcoming Winter Games is certainly something that neither Russell, nor his parents are overlooking, but for the most part the Curriers have faith in the joint effort, between the Russians and Americans, to keep athletes and spectators safe. Security within the Olympic circle remains extremely tight, yet there's still concern pertaining to transit points and scanning areas leading into the venue. If nothing else, the terrorist threats have succeeded in creating an atmosphere of paranoia that is tainting what has always been a jovial celebration of sport and country.

Andrew Kuchins of the Center for Strategic & International Studies in Washington told journalists recently that Russian authorities want to handle security alone, even though the country "has no experience with an event of this magnitude."

Thousands of tickets have yet to be sold for numerous events in Sochi and there is a growing concern that the increase in security will disturb the very nature of the Games. While no country has yet withdrawn from the Games, many are taking extra precautions, including the U.S. Olympic Committee, which will be providing its own set of protective agents and has advised American athletes against wearing any clothing that may identify them as part of the team.

"I think it worries him, but it worries us that he's there too," said Debbie Currier.

Despite the negative publicity and numerous threats surrounding the Games there is a sense that authorities are doing everything possible to keep the event a celebration rather than a tragedy, and Debbie and the rest of the Currier family are confident that everything will go according to plan.

The U.S. Biathlon Association sent out some information to help guide us and they seem to think it's safe enough. They believe that Russian and American authorities are doing everything they can to keep us all safe."

The Curriers are planning to leave Caribou on Feb. 5th and hope to be landing in Moscow sometime late the next day.

Ms. COLLINS. Russell's dedication and his community spirit have a strong ally in this remarkable story, the Maine Winter Sports Center. The center was founded in 1999, with the purpose of rekindling Aroostook County's skiing heritage, spurring economic development in that rural region, bringing families together in wholesome recreation, and countering the sedentary lifestyle that leads to so many health problems among our greater population. The Center's world-class facilities in Fort Kent and Presque Isle, ME, have hosted national and international cross-country and biathlon competitions. For the 2006 and 2010 Olympics, 13 Members of the U.S. biathlon team trained at the Maine Winter Sports Center, but Russell is the first homegrown Olympian to come up entirely through the center's program.

Russell Currier demonstrates that growing up in a community that works hard and works together can be such a great advantage when combined with individual desire, determination, and skill. The success Russell has achieved in realizing his Olympic dream and the support along the way that he has received are truly inspiring.

I am so proud of Russell and all who helped him achieve his dream. I wish him and his teammates all the best.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE "FIRST TVA CITY"

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I rise today to commemorate a special occasion for the Tennessee Valley Authority and the city of Tupelo, MS.

Eighty years ago, on February 7, 1934, Tupelo, MS, became the first city to receive electricity from the Tennessee Valley Authority. If you visit today, you will see the sign at the intersection of Gloster and Main Streets proclaiming Tupelo as the "First T-V-A City."

Tupelo's connection to TVA power has had a tremendous impact, improving the quality of life and economic well-being for residents of Tupelo, the State of Mississippi, and across the South. The success helped Northeast Mississippi become a pioneer of rural electrification. As a resident of Tupelo myself, I am proud of the partnership Mississippi has built with TVA over the past eight decades.

Anyone who has experienced a power outage can attest to our reliance on

electricity today. It touches almost every aspect of our lives. But imagine a time when access to electricity was confined to major cities and densely populated areas. Luxuries such as the radio, the washing machine, and the refrigerator were known only to those who lived in cities because it was not profitable for energy companies to provide electricity to rural areas.

In those days, the difference between life with electricity and life without it was so great that a large migration was taking place from rural to urban areas. Already impoverished regions of the country were at risk of lagging even further behind.

Like much of the rural South, Mississippi struggled with restricted access to electricity and the economic limitations it perpetuated. It became clear that improving rural life depended on access to electricity.

By 1930 nearly 85 percent of homes in large urban areas had electrical service, but barely 10 percent of rural homes had the same access. In Mississippi, only 1.5 percent of farm homes had electricity—the lowest in the country.

The creation of the TVA was a game changer. As America spiraled into a devastating depression, Mississippi Congressman John Rankin worked with Nebraska Senator George William Norris to improve and expand rural electrification. The result of their efforts was the TVA Act, passed by Congress on May 18, 1933. TVA began serving Mississippians in 1933 and powering Tupelo in 1934. The goal was simple: to improve the living and economic conditions of seven Southeastern States. By providing affordable electricity to rural communities, TVA was an important economic boost, delivering a needed commodity to one of the country's poorest regions.

Tupelo's proximity to the Wilson Dam on the Tennessee River enabled it to become the first TVA city in 1934, allowing its residents to purchase electricity at some of the most affordable rates in the country. This completely revolutionized life for the citizens of Tupelo and even more Mississippians as TVA expanded.

About 50 miles north of Tupelo, the town of Corinth, MS, was also at the forefront of rural electrification, proving that an electric power cooperative could work. In McPeters Furniture Store, "The Corinth Experiment" led to the creation of the Alcorn County Electric Power Association—the first electric power cooperative in the United States.

In November of 1934 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt came to Northeast Mississippi, stopping in Corinth and Tupelo. We still talk about that visit today.

The effort and dedication of the communities in Northeast Mississippi paid off. From 1930 to 1940 the number of farm homes in the State with electricity skyrocketed from 4,792 to 27,670. Today TVA provides reliable, clean,

low-cost energy to more than 332,000 households in Mississippi.

The TVA of 1934 is much different from the Tennessee Valley Authority of 2014. Eighty years ago hydroelectric dams provided TVA's power. Since then, TVA has developed coal, nuclear, natural gas, and renewable energy—all of the above serving approximately 9 million customers in seven States.

I look forward to TVA's continued success, and I congratulate the many Mississippians who have contributed to the legacy of TVA over the past 80 years.

Madam President, 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.

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

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

Mr. FRANKEN. Madam President, I rise today to join my colleagues in calling on the Senate to pass an extension of emergency unemployment insurance. I am deeply disappointed and frustrated that millions of hard-working Americans are now wondering how they will put food on their family's table and a roof over their heads because Washington has been unable to extend critical unemployment insurance.

A few weeks ago we had a bipartisan vote to move forward with debate on the extension of what is called emergency unemployment compensation. I hope we can build on that vote and move forward as quickly as possible to restore this vital lifeline before more Americans who have worked hard and followed the rules their entire lives slip from middle class into poverty.

The expiration of emergency unemployment insurance is an urgent problem for tens of thousands of Minnesotans and for millions of Americans. At the end of this past year, unemployment insurance expired for 1.3 million Americans, including 8,500 Minnesotans. If we don't renew that unemployment insurance over the next year, this lifeline will run out for another 3.6 million Americans, including 65,500 Minnesotans. These are real people. These are fathers and mothers. They are people whose families and local communities are struggling.

As I have traveled around Minnesota, I have had the chance to speak with many of the Minnesotans who are affected by the expiration of unemployment insurance. It is not the fault of these people or these workers who have lost their jobs.

Very often, these workers were just unlucky enough to be working in the wrong sector of the economy at the wrong time. Sometimes they were from communities that lost a large employer.

A few weeks ago I held a roundtable with unemployed workers who have

been helped by unemployment insurance. These are long-term unemployed. There were also some workforce professionals who are helping these folks and others find jobs in today's recovering economy. The unemployed women I spoke with—Ann, Amy, and Robin—had been working and paying taxes for unemployment insurance for decades. One of them is in her forties, a mom with two kids, one a 3-year-old. The other two women are older workers, one in her fifties, the other in her early sixties. The one in her fifties was a meeting planner. When the recession hit, businesses cut costs by holding fewer meetings, and she couldn't find a job in her field but is trying to find a job in any field. These women had all been skilling up, getting the skills they could to try to get an office job and be more conversant in Excel or some computer program.

All the Minnesotans I have spoken with have been working hard to find jobs, but they face a tough situation in our economy. In November the Labor Department reported that for every job opening there are almost three people seeking jobs. That doesn't mean you will get a job if you apply for three jobs. A few weeks ago a job counselor in Minnesota told me that there are often hundreds of applicants for every good job posting and that these jobs are often filled internally. I am glad businesses are hiring from within or promoting from within, but it is stories such as these that highlight why we need emergency unemployment—to help those workers who were working in a sector that has experienced a major downturn or live in a community where it is particularly hard to find a job and particularly if they are of a certain age.

One of the women I met at the roundtable, Ann from Eden Prairie, had also written me. What she told me really illustrates the situation so many Minnesotans are facing. Ann wrote:

I have been extremely active in my job search, but have regrettably not found new employment. My Minnesota Unemployment Insurance ran out last week and I applied for Federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation just this past week . . . I ask you to please ask yourself what you would do to provide for your family. I have a 9 year old daughter . . . and a 3 year old son. I am the sole provider for my family . . . I am not looking for a handout, nor do I believe that staying on unemployment insurance is in my best interest. But the \$483 a week it provides will at least allow me to make my mortgage payment.

Ann is remarkably articulate. She volunteers at her son's school, partly because she wants to be involved in her son's life but also to network. One of the counselors there said: The hardest job there is is looking for a job.

Minnesotans such as Ann and the millions of Americans around the country in the same situation have worked for decades. Every one of these women had worked and been paying into unemployment insurance for decades. They don't deserve to be punished or to

lose their homes because they are unable to find a job within 26 weeks. Often, they need unemployment insurance so they can put gas in the car to look for a job or so they can keep their phone.

The economy is recovering, but things are still tough for many people. Now is not the time to cut off unemployment insurance. Not only is unemployment still above average, but the long-term unemployed—workers who have been looking for work for at least 6 months—make up 37 percent of today's unemployed. Congress has never allowed extended unemployment insurance to expire when the long-term unemployment rate is as high as it is today. Today the 2.5-percent long-term unemployment rate is nearly double the level it was when previous emergency benefits were allowed to expire, and the current unemployment rate of 6.7 percent is 1.1 percentage points higher than when George W. Bush signed the current round of emergency unemployment compensation into law.

We know the unemployment crisis is not over. It remains a significant issue for workers, especially older workers, who experience longer periods of unemployment than younger workers when they lose their jobs.

Extending unemployment insurance also makes economic sense. In 2011 the Congressional Budget Office stated that aid to the unemployed is among the policies with "the largest effects on output and employment per dollar of budgetary costs." CBO estimates that extending benefits through 2014 would help expand the economy and contribute to the creation of an additional 200,000 jobs. The Council of Economic Advisers estimates that without a full-year extension, the economy will generate 240,000 fewer jobs by the end of 2014.

Unemployment insurance has been shown to help people stay in the workforce, allowing them to contribute to our economic recovery rather than slip into poverty. The Census Bureau estimates that unemployment benefits have kept 2.5 million people who are trying to stay in the workforce out of poverty in 2012 alone and have kept 11 million unemployed workers out of poverty since 2008.

Extending unemployment insurance for those who need it is far from the only thing we should be doing to help people get back to work. I have spoken many times about one of my highest priorities in this area—addressing the skills gap by supporting workforce training partnerships between businesses and community and technical colleges. There are other things we should be doing, such as rebuilding our infrastructure. But it would be a tremendous mistake to fail to renew the unemployment insurance that has lapsed.

People such as Ann and Robin and all those I meet around the State of Minnesota, and the millions of others around the country, when they are

looking really hard for work, are spending hours a day looking for work, almost 24 hours a day because they keep their phones on. They are thinking about it constantly. Let's not pull the rug out from under them now. They are trying to catch up in an economy that is recovering but still has a long way to go. We shouldn't be jeopardizing their families' economic security and we shouldn't be jeopardizing our Nation's economic recovery with a shortsighted decision like letting this critical safety net expire.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR MAX BAUCUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I rise to speak of my colleague, our friend Senator BAUCUS, who hopefully will be confirmed by the Senate to his new post in a few hours.

I have, of course, known Senator BAUCUS since I came to the Senate, but even before, one of my first impressions of him was a picture of Senator BAUCUS in his white cowboy hat on his ranch in Montana. To me, a kid from New York City, he looked like the Marlboro Man. He was handsome and he was in the cowboy hat. So I said: Wow.

When I met Senator BAUCUS, I found his heart, his brain, and his soul were every bit as good as the outside. He was a great leader of the Finance Committee. First, he had great intellect. MAX BAUCUS would see an issue, understand the issue, and get to the heart of the issue quicker than almost anybody else. He understood the vagaries of legislation, and he knew how to try to get things done. He always worked in a bipartisan way. He reached out to Republicans, and many criticized him sometimes for doing it, but given the gridlock in this body, in retrospect, everybody would think: Wow, that is what we should be doing. And he tried and tried.

Of course, his crowning legislative achievement was health care. I know there are some—particularly on the other side of the aisle—who criticize it, but I have no doubt that MAX BAUCUS will be regarded as a giant in what he did in coming up with the health care reform bill. I have no doubt that as the kinks are worked out and as the effort moves forward, it will be regarded as one of the pieces of landmark legislation of this decade and this century, and it wouldn't have happened without MAX BAUCUS.

There are 37 million Americans who now have access to health insurance, a whole generation of young adults who will be insured through the age of 26, and protection of all Americans with preexisting conditions because of the diligence, the never-give-up attitude

Senator BAUCUS had. On so many other things in the bill—getting after the private insurance companies; now community health centers are providing health care for the poorest among us in a better way—this is one of many issues on which MAX BAUCUS took the lead.

As I say, he was a premier legislator, worked long and hard, figured out what he thought the right thing to do was, tried to get colleagues from the other side of the aisle as well as on our side of the aisle to support it, and then got it done. The list of his accomplishments is long. He took the bull by the horns, never backing off.

I know Senator BAUCUS will be an outstanding ambassador to China. It is one of the most important foreign policy positions our country has to offer, and having someone with MAX BAUCUS's acute mind, great persistence, good heart, and good soul will mean a lot.

Not only are we going to miss MAX, we are going to very much miss his wife Mel. She is terrific. They met not too long ago, and I know how happy they make each other. I think it makes all of us feel happy as well.

MAX, you are truly the best of the "Last Best Place," and we will all miss you.

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.

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

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I rise to talk about the impact of the Affordable Care Act on the workplace. A report by the Congressional Budget Office came out yesterday stating that the number of jobs affected by the Affordable Care Act was triple what they estimated in 2009. At that time they estimated this would cost us up to 800,000 jobs. Yesterday they said it would cost us up to 2.3 million jobs. I guess those who voted for it didn't have an impartial observer tell them that there would be substantial workplace costs. Now that same group, after looking at the application and how the law is going to affect people, says there will be three times as many jobs lost because of people moving from full-time work to part-time work.

This is another strong indication that the Affordable Care Act has not been good for the workplace, and I think we are seeing more and more that the Affordable Care Act is not good for most people. I am sure that out there somewhere—just the law of averages—there are people who benefit. I think there are other ways we could have reached out to those people and included them.

I have some emails and letters that were addressed to my office that I will

read into the RECORD. We verified all of the correspondence with the people involved. We wanted to make sure we could use their first names so I could talk about this, and I believe the people who wrote us—some stories are beyond belief—were well intentioned.

John, from Farmington, MO, said he is one of the founding shareholders for his company and has been since 1975. They provided insurance for their employees and their families, but this year their insurance person came to them and said there will be a 50-percent increase when they renew their coverage later this year. In this small company, they are currently paying \$12,000 a month and will be paying \$18,000 a month. John says: We are a profitable business, but we are not so profitable that \$6,000 a month doesn't make a big difference to us when our insurance premiums go up 50 percent.

Lisa, in Baldwin, MO, said she is an insurance broker. She contacted us to talk about the examples many of her clients have had and the way they were affected by the health care bill. This is one of her letters:

I have a family of five people—a husband, wife, and three children—who were paying \$437/month for a Health Savings Account plan. Their rate for a comparable plan under ACA was \$805/month.

So that \$437 this family was paying—if they replace that, along with everything else they are doing in a given month—is now \$805.

She says:

I have quoted plans for numerous people over the last few months. All have lesser benefits than what they currently have and are far more expensive.

She doesn't say "some," she says "most." And this is coming from someone who does this for a living. She said that in every case she has quoted, there have been higher costs and fewer benefits.

William, from Desloge, MO, said that his wife had a pacemaker installed 3 years ago. He goes on to say:

Recently, she called to set up a follow-up checkup on the pacemaker with her hospital. She was told that due to the budget constraints placed on the hospital due to the Affordable Care Act they no longer provide those services.

According to William, instead of driving 10 miles for these services, they have to drive 60 miles one way. They have to drive 120 to 150 miles to go to one of the places located in St. Louis when they used to drive just 10 miles. The reason the hospital gave is that the Affordable Care Act has created that.

This is a letter from a broker:

I have a client in her late 50s who makes \$20,000 and qualifies for the subsidy. Even with the subsidy, her premium was around \$300 a month for the lowest possible level in the plan.

I think that level is called the bronze plan. For the lowest level plan, her subsidy is \$300 a month, and that was about 50 percent more than she had been paying for comparable coverage.

Mark and Janet, from Platte City, MO, were informed in September 2013 that as of January 1, 2014, their premiums would double. Here is what they say in their letter:

While we do not think ObamaCare, as it now stands, is good for this nation, at least it was an attempt to do something—

These are people who were hopeful about this and were still not critical of people who were trying to do something—

about out-of-control medical costs. It needs serious revisions and parts of it should be repealed. People in their 60s do not need maternity coverage! And mental health/substance abuse coverage should not be mandatory either.

That is the view of Mark and Janet.

Mary Ann, in Scott City, MO, said she has had continuous health care coverage for 36 years without ever having a day without health insurance coverage. After being diagnosed with cancer, her insurance was canceled and she was forced to get insurance somewhere else. Why was her insurance canceled? She had been in the high-risk pool that the State runs.

In 2009 I proposed other ways to do this and expand those high-risk pools. I think by the time the high-risk pool went out of existence on December 31, there were slightly more than 1,000 people still in it. I think we are eventually going to get 4,000 letters. What were they paying? They were paying 135 percent of the premium everybody else was paying. They had a high risk already, and they were generally able to go to the doctors they wanted. According to the letters we get, they are no longer able to go to the doctors they want. Doctors are important, but, frankly, doctors are even more important if you have been sick. If a doctor has been your doctor through an illness, that is something Mary Ann and others would like to have finished.

Let me read one other:

As of December 23rd, I was finally able to enroll. It's costing me more and I'm getting less. Unbelievably, healthcare.gov wouldn't allow me to enroll my healthy 18-year-old son. I thought he was the healthy young person they needed in order to make this program work.

That may have been a Web site problem. The Web site will be solved. The President said the Web site is working exactly the way it is supposed to, so maybe that has been solved.

I don't think the appeals process is working yet. I am told there are a lot of people appealing information that somehow wrongly got into the Web site. They can't get that solved.

Mary continues to say that the ACA has been a disaster for her and her family. She says: Shame on us for letting this happen. I want my old insurance back. I don't appreciate being mandated at the last minute to buy something that has inferior health coverage. It is administratively inept and costs more. Please resolve this disaster before it gets worse.

Myron, from Hannibal, MO, says:

My company told me last November to go to my wife's group health insurance plan because they didn't know how ObamaCare was going to work out.

On advice from an insurance broker, my company got me off their group policy. As a result, my health insurance premiums went from \$198 a month to \$549 a month.

Natalie, from Meadville, says:

My health insurance costs for my family of four have doubled and my benefits have decreased. I no longer have office visit benefits and my deductible has gone from \$3,500 to \$10,000.

She said that she raised her deductible to try to lower her insurance premiums.

She goes on to say:

At the end of 2014, when we are forced to sign up for an Obamacare plan, we will probably cancel our insurance if it is cheaper to pay the penalty.

I can't tell you how many letters we have that say: My premium has gone up and my benefits have gone down. There has been a huge number of people who have contacted us about that.

Pat from Kansas City is worried about her kids, her oldest daughter, and her family. Her premium went from \$5,000 to \$10,000 a year.

Scott from Lee's Summit says his premium went up 27 percent for himself and his son. He was told it would have gone up 7 percent anyway, but 20 percent of that 27 percent—or actually more than 20 percent—that 20 percent of the increase was because of the change in health care policies.

I think the more we know, the more we know the kinds of things we could do to make the health care system work better. I would like to see us get back to doing that. Until we do, these letters are going to continue to come in, and we are going to continue to try to help these people find a better answer. But the government involvement here may mean there is not a better answer until the government figures out how to create a bigger marketplace and more choices and let people have the health care they think meets their family's needs.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, what is the order of business right now?

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is considering the unemployment compensation bill.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I rise to talk about the absolute necessity to pass this unemployment compensation bill. We should do it because it is the morally right thing to do, it is the economically right thing to do. We have listened to our Republican friends, and even though they always said in the past: Do not worry about paying for it—they passed it almost five times under George Bush without paying for it—now all of a sudden they say: Pay for it. We do pay for it in this bill. So I do not know what it is they exactly want.

They claim they are empathetic to people unemployed, the long-term un-

employed, and we know that rate is very high—long-term unemployment—even though we have seen in the last, I guess, how many months, 8 million jobs—in about 46 months—but not everybody is fortunate to get those jobs. Clearly, we came out of the worst recession since the Great Depression, brought about by Wall Street. It happened under George W. Bush. We were bleeding jobs—bleeding jobs—700,000, 800,000 jobs a month. It was frightening. The GDP was contracting.

President Obama turned it around. I predict he will go down in history as one of the great Presidents because we were almost flat on our backs, and yet he acted. Luckily, we had a few Republicans who helped us pass that stimulus, which in my State made a huge difference and all over the country. It got us on our feet. We have made reforms that are very important.

I also have to say, the "Bad News Bears" on the other side—every day, negative stories and negative stories and negative stories about ObamaCare, the Affordable Care Act. I daresay, they ignore the millions and millions and millions of Americans who for the first time are able to get affordable health insurance. It is private health insurance, not a government-run system, except for the Medicaid part, which we expanded. The exchanges are private insurance.

They are able to afford it because the way we wrote the bill there are subsidies for the middle class on those exchanges, which is making it affordable for people. You should see the letters I get. I have read many of them and put them in the RECORD. People who had a preexisting condition, who never could get health care before, they write me they are thanking God—thanking God—that we passed that bill. Their kids, who were going to be thrown off their health care, are now on that health insurance until they are 26 years old. Being a woman is no longer an excuse to have your rates doubled and tripled. It is not a preexisting condition to be a woman anymore. If you have diabetes or you have had cancer, you still get your insurance. The insurance company cannot walk out on you just when you need it the most. Come on.

I say to my Republican friends, step up to the plate. Yes, we have kinks in the system. We knew that when we said: If you love your insurance, you could keep it—I admit, I should have said: If it meets the basic standards because we do not want people having junk policies. But we fixed that. The President has stepped up to the plate and fixed that.

So all they do is focus on the negative, while people are on their knees thanking God they have health care, many for the first time.

I am kind of stunned at it, really. I really am. We are ready, willing, and able to fix whatever glitches there are, and the President has been totally honest about the disastrous rollout. We

understand that. Despite that, we have millions and millions of people with new, affordable health care for the first time.

Now we look at extending emergency Federal unemployment insurance for the long-term unemployed.

We did not act in December. That was a moral outrage. We did not have the votes. The Republicans are filibustering. We need to get 60. So 1.7 million Americans have lost their extended benefits since the end of December. In my home State, 276,000 people have lost their extended unemployment benefits. Think about it: 276,000 Californians. Some of our States have populations of 600,000, 700,000—276,000 people just in California.

What does that mean? It means they are suffering. It means their families are suffering. It means they are faced with disaster. It also means they cannot go down to the corner store, they cannot go fill their car with gas. They have all these problems and it trickles down through the community and the community is hurting. That is why we know our bill is so important, because it not only helps the individual, it helps the communities.

We know—we know—that GDP is, in fact, affected if we do not act. Last month my colleagues on the other side blocked a one-year extension of unemployment benefits, even after we offered to pay for it. We gave them votes on the amendments of their choice. We gave them everything they asked for. It is never enough. We had one Republican Senator, and I thank Mr. HELLER, who voted for cloture last month.

I just hope my colleagues will listen to the people and support this extension. I would like to, for my remaining time, read to you some of the letters I am getting and emails I am getting from real people—real people.

This is Kristen from Chatsworth:

I am writing you to please continue to help get an extension on unemployment.

After working over ten years in the clerical field, I was let go and was on unemployment. I have been constantly searching for jobs and after rejection after rejection I have not given up. It is scary to hear that my claim will be up after 26 weeks of unemployment. I do not know how I will make ends meet if they do not extend unemployment.

I know I am not alone on this subject and millions are as scared as I am. I have never been on welfare or any assistance even being a teenage mother.

My friends on the other side are always talking about how if a teenager gets pregnant, she should have the child. Here is someone who did that. We should help this woman. We should help this woman.

Here is another one, Jay from Albany:

Please keep pushing for the unemployment extension. I am one of those who were cut off in December. I'm 61, have 3 college degrees and am a Vietnam-era veteran.

This is a man who is a Vietnam-era veteran. He has three college degrees. This is what he says:

I am not a number or a lazy or stupid individual as some Republicans would like you to believe. Those checks are our only lifeline.

With several lay-offs in the last twelve years, the Dot.com crash, and the worst economy of my life, I have sadly had to run through my life savings and 401Ks.

Think about it, having to run through your life savings and your 401(k). Think about it, a veteran who put his life on the line for his country. He is insulted that the Republicans are intimating that he is lazy or stupid—his words. This is what this man writes—and then I am going to yield my time so my friend from Montana can add his eloquence to this—this is what he writes:

I have worked since I was 15 and fear I may be homeless soon if I don't get those federal unemployment checks.

Listen to what he says:

I eat one meal a day . . . and I'm starting to feel quite desperate. Please convince . . . your colleagues that this is something we all paid into and desperately need now and not in a month or two.

We are not receiving welfare checks, but checks we worked for and earned. I know you have always stood up for your constituents and those in times of need. I pray—

He writes:

I pray you are successful along with your fellow senators and representatives.

This is Jay in Albany.

Jay, there are a lot of us here who are not giving up on this. Your voice is heard.

I have to close with this one thing because it is so important. Sylvia from Pasadena—this is how she talks about this:

I want to be a normal person again and talk with friends and family about my day at work and what I achieved for my company or the recognition I received from my boss. I am not a lazy woman; I want and need to be a normal woman with a fair chance at finding a job.

I want my government to be patient . . . and show some compassion. Instead, I get Members of Congress calling me names and making me feel ashamed for losing my job through no fault of my own, and making me feel desperate because I don't know how I will be paying my bills.

Sylvia writes to me:

Please don't give up on me Mrs. Boxer. I ask you to continue to fight as I can still provide value to this great country. . . . I believe I'm worthy of a little compassion and not name calling.

These letters move me to tears, and I am not afraid to say it. I am not afraid to say it. Our friends wanted a short-term bill. That is what they have before them. Our friends wanted a pay-for. This is a pay-for they have agreed with. If they do not help us today—when I say “help us,” I mean help those who have written to all of us with their stories—they are turning their backs on the backbone of this Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I wish to very quickly thank the Senator from California for her remarks before I get into my prepared remarks.

We have just come through the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Unemployment is still at 7 percent. We need to get it lower. The bottom line is there are still some

folks out there who need some help, and as the economy continues to improve—we are not where we need to be yet—we ought to give those folks the help they need to get back on their feet, to give them the hope they need to reenter the workforce and become valuable parts of our economy again.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR MAX BAUCUS

Madam President, there is a beautiful small town in the farthest corner of northwest Montana. The town is called Libby, and it sits in the heart of the Kootenai Valley, surrounded by majestic snow-capped mountains. It is a beautiful place. But despite Libby's postcard-worthy views, the town has a troubled history.

Starting in 1919, mining companies began pulling vermiculite from the mountains outside of town. Vermiculite was used to bake, to build soil in gardens, and to insulate buildings. It was not long before the families of Libby began to pay the price for keeping their fellow Americans warm.

Mining vermiculite exposed Libby's miners and residents to asbestos dust. That asbestos got into their homes, their schools, and—eventually—their lungs. Over the decades, hundreds of folks in Libby died from asbestos exposure, and thousands more continue to suffer today.

When the W.R. Grace company bought the mines in 1963, the company denied that asbestos caused the illnesses plaguing the town's residents. Instead of sounding the alarm, they kept quiet while building corporate profits on the backs of Libby's suffering families and workers.

Word about Libby's fate finally made it to national news in 1999. The plight of Libby's families caught the attention of one man in particular, Montana's senior Senator MAX BAUCUS.

MAX soon began his crusade to get the EPA and the Department of Health and Human Services to take action. Despite MAX bringing countless government officials to northwest Montana to see what asbestos had done to the men, women, and children of Libby, it took 10 years for the government to declare this region a public health emergency, the first of its kind. Thanks to MAX, Libby today is home to a state-of-the-art medical clinic that screens and treats residents for asbestosis.

Thanks to MAX, the Affordable Care Act extended Medicare coverage to everyone in the emergency zone. Thanks to MAX, funds are flowing into Libby to remove asbestos from homes, schools, and playgrounds. Due to MAX's hard work and the determination of the people of Libby, the town is slowly putting the sordid legacy of W.R. Grace in its rearview mirror. MAX's hard work for the people of Libby is the MAX BAUCUS that Montanans have come to know.

But MAX's work for the people of Montana started many years before he

led the fight to help the people of Libby. In the early 1970s when MAX started in public service, he traveled to Butte to meet a fellow by the name of Harp Cote. Harp knew the lay of the land in Butte, but he did not know MAX. MAX did not know Butte. Harp was instantly impressed with MAX's willingness to work or, as Harp said it, MAX's "fire in the belly." MAX asked Harp to introduce him to Butte's leaders and voters. Unlike other candidates, MAX did not want Harp to lobby the folks of Butte on his behalf. Instead, MAX went door to door himself to win their support.

That kind of work ethic, where you put your own shoe leather into the fight, is the reason for MAX's many achievements in Congress, achievements that include saving Social Security from privatization, leading the charge to modernize the Clean Air Act, passing six farm bills and three highway bills to strengthen Montana's and America's economy.

Folks in Washington do not always recognize MAX's hard work. In a town where too many people race for the nearest TV cameras, MAX's preference for hard work does not always do him any favors. That is practically a mortal sin around here. But not for MAX. MAX has represented Montana in Congress since 1975.

His long record of service proves that Montanans do not want a showman. They do not want someone who yells across the aisle. They want someone who will reach across that aisle and find a way to say yes even when saying no is easier to do. It is like the folks in Libby. Montana wants someone who will work hard for them, who will get results and fight to improve our quality of life. Montanans have a soul mate in MAX BAUCUS.

I first met MAX in 1998 at an economic development meeting in Havre, MT. MAX is famous for his economic development summits in Butte. So it was no surprise that we first crossed paths when MAX was working to improve Montana's economy. At that point in his career MAX's record was already impressive.

In 1972, as Director of Montana's constitutional convention, MAX helped pass one of the most progressive state constitutions to date, enshrining protections for clean air, for clean water, and for the right to a quality education into law. He then walked the entire length of our State to introduce himself to Montanans and win a seat in Congress, meeting more men and women along the way like Harp Cote.

As MAX gained experience in the Senate, he became Chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee. Soon thereafter, well into his 50s, MAX hiked 820 miles, from one corner of our State to the other, to earn the support of Montanans during his 1996 reelection. So MAX, in your new role as Ambassador, take my advice and do not try to walk from one end of China to the other.

MAX next rose to become Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. As chairman, MAX did not have the luxury of not getting the job done. The Finance Committee has been home to some of our Nation's hardest-working Senators and greatest examples of bipartisanship because failing to support critical programs like Social Security and Medicare is simply not an option.

On the Finance Committee, you cannot sit back and throw stones. You have to roll up your sleeves, you have to find common ground, and you have to get the job done. That is what MAX did. He passed legislation to reduce Americans' tax burdens, improve children's health, and, most recently, to reform our Nation's broken health care system.

MAX's penchant for hard work and thoughtful, independent-minded leadership stems from another great Montanan that he and I both admire, former Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield. MAX met Mike as a teenager, and for many Montanans of today, myself included, MAX connects us to Mike's legacy as a champion for the greater good, as the champion for putting service and sacrifice well before self, and a champion for Montana.

Montana's leaders always put Montana first, and MAX is no exception. Just as Montana has shaped MAX, MAX has shaped Montana. MAX's dedication to our public lands is legendary. Montana is known as the Treasure State because of our incredible natural resources and unrivaled public spaces. From Yellowstone to Glacier, Montana is a place like no other. Throughout his career, MAX has set out to preserve our treasured lands for future generations to enjoy. In 2008, the same year he won reelection and became the first person to win all 56 counties in Montana, MAX helped set aside 320,000 acres of prime hunting and fishing lands across our State.

This land, which will forever be open to the public, is part of MAX's brainchild called the Montana Legacy Project. MAX's love of our outdoors extends to those who share his love. In March of 2000, he came to the Senate floor to remember a young Montanan, Sean-Michael Miles, who had tragically died in a car accident just over a year before.

MAX dedicated a scholarship in Sean's name. MAX repeated Sean's words:

I know this land may pay a price for being beautiful, as change advances, carrying with it the prospect of loss. It is a land I desperately love. It is a part of me. It hurts so much to care so much. Yet as a westerner, I am invited to breathe it all in deeply each day.

MAX, Sean would be proud of your hard work to preserve our treasured places. I pledge to carry on your efforts so Montanans can continue to cherish our special places and pass our traditions down to our kids and our grandkids.

But it is not a stretch to say that I would not be here if it were not for

MAX BAUCUS. MAX has brought world leaders to Butte for his economic development summit. He brought camera crews onto construction sites and small businesses as part of his famous Montana workdays. He operated forklifts in warehouses, made bread in Montana's bakeries, and dug ditches—all to get a better feel for hard-working Montanans each and every day.

He fought for Montana farmers and ranchers who feed our Nation. But he also helped bring a dry-land farmer from Big Sandy, MT, to the Senate. MAX, I cannot tell you how much you have meant to me as a friend, as a partner, as a mentor. I have lost track of how many meetings and rallies we have attended together across our State. But I do know that at each one you have had my back.

So when I arrived in the Senate in 2007, it was because of you that a guy with seven fingers and a flat-top haircut quickly figured how to get from his office to the Senate floor. It is because of you that I had a model for working across the aisle to pass thoughtful, responsible legislation. It is because of you that I always know that I have a friend to turn to when I need advice; that is, because along with your tremendous staff, you have always put Montana first. You have built the Montana Democratic Party into a beacon of common sense, freedom, and opportunity in the West. Our party is stronger because of you and your dedication to our State.

After retiring from the Senate in 1976, Mike Mansfield became the Ambassador to Japan. Now you are posed to continue following in Senator Mansfield's footsteps as Ambassador to China. I know that you will continue to serve Montana, even as you serve our Nation's interests overseas. I wish you the best. While you are gone, I will keep up your fight for Montana, particular the Montanans who need someone to fight for them. Montanans like Les Skramstad. Les was a long-time Libby resident. For years, he saw politicians come to Libby with a promise to help. That help never arrived.

When MAX came to Libby, Les told him he would be watching. Les passed away in 2007 before Libby began getting its help. But MAX keeps Les's photo close because in Montana a promise to help is a promise to keep. That is the Montana way. That is the MAX BAUCUS way.

MAX, it has been an honor to serve with you. It is an honor to call you friend. The Senate will be a lesser body without you. I wish you God's speed and good luck. This is an incredibly important job. I know you are more than up to that task. Thank you for your service to this Senate and to Montana and to this country.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. I know we are shortly going to be voting on, among other issues, the nomination of Senator MAX BAUCUS to be the next U.S. Ambassador to China. I would expect that he would have a unanimous, if not nearly unanimous, vote in the Senate.

I said in the Foreign Relations Committee this week that clearly one of the biggest challenges and the biggest opportunities before U.S. foreign policy today is getting the relationship between the United States and China—in the context of our rebalance to the Asia-Pacific—right. I can think of few more able or qualified at this important moment in history than our friend and colleague, the Senator from Montana, to help provide advice and guidance to the President and to Congress about how to get that relationship right.

He is an expert on trade issues. He understands what we face in the coming years as China's economy continues to grow. He is fully aware of the facts that we have had U.S. exports to China that have increased by almost \$40 billion in the past 4 years alone, creating and sustaining millions of sustaining U.S. jobs in sectors across the board—automobiles, power generation, machinery, aircraft, and other vital industrial sectors. His trade missions to China, since he has been the chairman of the Finance Committee, have given him the perspective he needs to deal with the realities of our policy options.

From the hearing he clearly understands that through the rest of the 21st century and beyond, much of the strategic, political, and economic future of the world is likely to be shaped by decisions made by Washington, Beijing, and the capitals of Asia over the next 4 to 5 years. How we get that rebalance right is incredibly important, and the Ambassador to China is incredibly important in that regard.

Finally, trade is not the only issue as it relates to China. Our collective security, having China pursue a rules-based system, is incredibly important, as well as what happens in the South China Sea—all of the issues Senator BAUCUS addressed in his nomination hearing with great ability, insight, and a willingness to take them on.

As the very final point, human rights is an incredibly important issue as it relates to China. I want to read briefly from the transcript where he was asked about the question of human rights. He described a moment as a Senator in which he raised the issue with then-President Jiang Zemin.

Senator BAUCUS said:

He said [the President of China] I did not know what I was are talking about, basically. But then I went to Tibet, went to Lhasa and raised the same point there. And

sure enough, within about 2 or 3 weeks, this person was released. . . .

Protection of human rights is the bedrock. It is the underpinning of American and world society. . . . People look to America, look to America to lead on so many issues, including the protection of human rights, religious freedoms, freedom of the press, all the rights that are enumerated in the universal declaration. It is what most progress springs from.

And the answer is yes, Senator [Cardin]. You have my commitment [on human rights].

I think the totality of trade, currency manipulation, security, human rights, and the answers that he gave in his hearing, clearly show manifestly that he is very capable of being the next Ambassador.

I urge a unanimous vote in the Senate, and I yield the floor.

Mr. REED. First let me add my accolades to those of the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about Senator BAUCUS. He is superbly prepared to be our next ambassador to China. He is a friend and colleague. The President chose wisely, and I anticipate his confirmation.

In a few minutes we will have the opportunity to provide relief to 1.74 million job seekers, to help local business, to get people back to work, and to do so in a fiscally responsible manner.

Some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have thoughtfully engaged with us to find a path forward. Many of their ideas are incorporated into this principled compromise. It has been 40 days since these Americans have had their unemployment insurance cut. Now is the time to act and help our economy grow.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of providing aid to 1.7 million Americans—growing each week by an estimated 70,000. This is the right thing to do. At this moment, this is the right way to do it, and the only question before the Senate is will we do the right thing for the American people.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, it has been over a month since Congress allowed the Emergency Unemployment Compensation program to expire. That means that more than 1.5 million out-of-work Americans—including more than 6,000 Rhode Islanders—have by now lost a critical lifeline. While Republicans obstruct here in Washington, families in Providence and Bristol and Westerly are scrambling to pay the mortgage or keep the heat on in the dead of winter. Over the coming months, thousands more Rhode Islanders will not be eligible to receive extended weeks of unemployment benefits as their regular unemployment benefits expire.

Congress passed—and President Bush signed—the Emergency Unemployment Compensation program in response to the epidemic of joblessness brought on by the great recession, just as we have done during previous economic crises. The program has been extended several times as our Nation continues to strug-

gle under stubbornly high rates of unemployment. Yet Senate Republicans would not agree to extend this lifeline to families before the holidays, and just this week, they voted to prevent us from restoring the emergency assistance.

Even with the worst of the recession behind us, too many Rhode Islanders are still unable to find work. The unemployment rate in my State—9.1 percent in December—remains well above the national average. The sheer depth and duration of this jobs crisis have plunged unprecedented numbers of Americans into long-term unemployment. The share of workers unemployed longer than 6 months is still greater than the previous record set in the early 1980s. Now is not the time to pull the plug on our fellow Americans.

Nationwide, there are three unemployed workers for every available job opening. For some, the jobs just aren't there, and a strategy to make people desperate creates nothing but cruelty.

My Republican colleagues who think this assistance doesn't make a real difference should talk to the 74 year-old woman from Westerly, RI, who contacted my office. She was laid off in July after 11 years with the same company and is still unable to find work. She has moved in with a neighbor to cut costs. She says emergency unemployment assistance helped her keep her head above water.

Those who think extended unemployment discourages people from seeking work should talk to the forty-five-year-old husband and father from West Warwick, who finds himself unemployed for the first time in his life. Since losing his job 5 months ago, he has applied to nearly 100 jobs with no success. With only his wife's wages coming in the door, his emergency unemployment helped this family to barely make ends meet.

Unemployment benefits spent on rent, groceries, and other basics contribute directly to economic activity. In fact, the Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the country could lose 200,000 jobs if unemployment benefits aren't extended.

My senior Senator JACK REED has led the fight to maintain this basic support for Americans still struggling to get back to work. He has worked tirelessly across the aisle to find a thoughtful compromise. Rhode Islanders are grateful for his leadership and he has my full support in the effort to restore emergency unemployment assistance to American workers. The Senate must not turn its back on those struggling the longest to find work.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. I ask unanimous consent to yield back all remaining time.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the

Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the Reed (RI) amendment No. 2714 to S. 1845, a bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Jack Reed, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Sheldon Whitehouse, Brian Schatz, Barbara Boxer, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Thomas R. Carper, Elizabeth Warren, Patty Murray, Mark Begich, Sherrod Brown, Jeff Merkley, Angus S. King, Jr., Charles E. Schumer, Bill Nelson, Christopher A. Coons.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on amendment No. 2714 to S. 1845, a bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 58, nays 40, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 23 Leg.]

YEAS—58

Ayotte	Hagan	Murphy
Baldwin	Harkin	Murray
Baucus	Heinrich	Nelson
Begich	Heitkamp	Pryor
Bennet	Heller	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rockefeller
Booker	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Boxer	Kaine	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Landrieu	Stabenow
Carper	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Levin	Udall (CO)
Collins	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Coons	Markey	Warner
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warren
Durbin	Menendez	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Merkley	Wyden
Franken	Mikulski	
Gillibrand	Murkowski	

NAYS—40

Alexander	Fischer	Paul
Barrasso	Flake	Portman
Blunt	Graham	Reid
Boozman	Graham	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Rubio
Chambliss	Hoeven	Scott
Coats	Inhofe	Sessions
Coburn	Isakson	Shelby
Cochran	Johanns	Thune
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Toomey
Cornyn	Kirk	Vitter
Crapo	Lee	Wicker
Cruz	McCain	
Enzi	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—2

Moran Roberts

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP).

On this vote, the yeas are 58 and the nays are 40. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. I enter a motion to reconsider the vote by which cloture was not invoked on the Reed of Rhode Island amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion to reconsider is entered.

Mr. REID. Madam President, for the benefit of all Members, we are going to have another vote right now on the other cloture motion that has been scheduled. Then the Republican leader has said we can move forward on the Baucus nomination at that time.

I ask unanimous consent that the next two votes be 10 minutes in duration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

Pursuant to rule XXII, the clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture.

The assistant bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on S. 1845, a bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Jack Reed, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, Brian Schatz, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Thomas R. Carper, Elizabeth Warren, Patty Murray, Mark Begich, Sherrod Brown, Jeff Merkley, Angus S. King, Jr., Charles E. Schumer, Bill Nelson, Christopher A. Coons.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum called has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on S. 1845, a bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS).

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 55, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 24 Leg.]

YEAS—55

Baldwin	Harkin	Murray
Baucus	Heinrich	Nelson
Begich	Heitkamp	Pryor
Bennet	Heller	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rockefeller
Booker	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Boxer	Kaine	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Landrieu	Stabenow
Carper	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Levin	Udall (CO)
Coons	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	Markey	Warner
Durbin	McCaskill	Warren
Feinstein	Menendez	Whitehouse
Franken	Merkley	Wyden
Gillibrand	Mikulski	
Hagan	Murphy	

NAYS—43

Alexander	Enzi	Murkowski
Ayotte	Fischer	Paul
Barrasso	Flake	Portman
Blunt	Graham	Reid
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Hatch	Rubio
Chambliss	Hoeven	Scott
Coats	Inhofe	Sessions
Coburn	Isakson	Shelby
Cochran	Johanns	Thune
Collins	Johnson (WI)	Toomey
Corker	Kirk	Vitter
Cornyn	Lee	Wicker
Crapo	McCain	
Cruz	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—2

Moran Roberts

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 55, the nays are 43. Three-fifths of the Senate duly chosen and sworn having not voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to offer a motion to reconsider the previous vote by which cloture was not invoked on S. 1845.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

Mr. REID. I know everyone is in a hurry to leave, and I will be very brief. I wish to make sure I am clear where we stand. We are one Republican vote away from restoring unemployment insurance for 1.7 million Americans, including 20,000 veterans who have lost their benefits during the last 5 weeks. We all support this on this side of the aisle.

Right now there is one Republican vote standing between 1.7 million Americans and the lifeline they need to make ends meet. I ask my Republican colleagues to think about the woman from Nevada who is 57 years old. She is couch-surfing. Younger people know a little bit about that term, but I hadn't heard the term before. She has because she has been forced to understand what it is—going around to friends' homes, apartments, and sleeping on their couches. She is 57 years old, worked from the time she was 18 years old. She lost her job and can't find a job. She is long-term unemployed. If she had just lost her job last week or a couple of months ago, she could go get unemployment, but she has been out of work for too long to be able to get it. She has sold everything she has except a clunker of a car, sold all of her personal things so she can buy gas in case she gets an interview.

People are in the same position as she in every State. Our job is to do right by them. All we need is one more Republican vote, one more Republican to step up and do the right thing. We are going to bring this vote up again sometime. I have spoken to my colleague Senator HELLER. I said: Dean, let's get this done. Tell me what is needed to get this done.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF MAX SIEBEN BAUCUS TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mr. REID. Madam President, after having consulted with the Republican leader, I now ask unanimous consent to move to executive session to consider Calendar No. 629, the nomination of our friend MAX BAUCUS to be Ambassador to China; further, I ask that all time be yielded back, with all of the provisions under the previous order remaining in effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

The legislative clerk read the nomination of MAX SIEBEN BAUCUS, of Montana, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the People's Republic of China.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of MAX SIEBEN BAUCUS, of Montana, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the People's Republic of China?

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second. There is a sufficient second. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BAUCUS (when his name was called). "Present."

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS).

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

The result was announced—yeas 96, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 25 Ex.]

YEAS—96

Alexander	Corker	Inhofe
Ayotte	Cornyn	Isakson
Baldwin	Crapo	Johanns
Barrasso	Cruz	Johnson (SD)
Begich	Donnelly	Johnson (WI)
Bennet	Durbin	Kaine
Blumenthal	Enzi	King
Blunt	Feinstein	Kirk
Booker	Fischer	Klobuchar
Boozman	Flake	Landrieu
Boxer	Franken	Leahy
Brown	Gillibrand	Lee
Burr	Graham	Levin
Cantwell	Grassley	Manchin
Cardin	Hagan	Markley
Carper	Harkin	McCain
Casey	Hatch	McCaskill
Chambliss	Heinrich	McConnell
Coats	Heitkamp	Menendez
Cochran	Heller	Merkley
Collins	Hirono	Mikulski
Coons	Hoeben	Murkowski

Murphy	Rubio	Thune
Murray	Sanders	Toomey
Nelson	Schatz	Udall (CO)
Paul	Schumer	Udall (NM)
Portman	Scott	Vitter
Pryor	Sessions	Warner
Reed	Shaheen	Warren
Reid	Shelby	Whitehouse
Risch	Stabenow	Wicker
Rockefeller	Tester	Wyden

ANSWERED "PRESENT"—1

Baucus

NOT VOTING—3

Coburn Moran Roberts

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION EXTENSION ACT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from Utah.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR MAX BAUCUS

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I am pleased that my colleague and very dear friend MAX BAUCUS was confirmed by this body the way he was. He will make a fine ambassador to China. We all know what an honorable, decent man he is. We all know of his abilities. We all know he has run a very tough committee, a very important committee, and has done a terrific job in doing so.

All I can say is I rise to wish my good friend Senator MAX BAUCUS good luck as he departs to serve as the next U.S. Ambassador to China.

We are going to miss MAX. I do not think it is fair to this body, but, nevertheless, I think it is fair to our country because MAX will make a great ambassador. Senator BAUCUS first came to the Senate in 1978 and has the distinction of being Montana's longest serving Senator. So, as you can see, I have served with Senator BAUCUS for a long time—longer than the two of us would like to admit sometimes. Over the years I have come to respect his commitment both to his constituents and to his principles. Having worked side by side with him on the Senate Finance Committee, I know a lot about his constituents and his principles. He raises his constituents constantly and his principles I do not think he ever wavered.

If you want to understand my friend MAX BAUCUS's priorities, take a look at the sign on his Senate office desk. Like MAX, it is to the point and unequivocal. The sign says: "Montana comes first." Plain and simple, not much nuance, the language is pretty declarative.

That is MAX BAUCUS. In his long and distinguished Senate career, he always put the people of Montana first.

Both Senator BAUCUS and I are westerners, and westerners expect a certain amount of independence in their Senators. They expect us to work across

the aisle and attempt to solve problems and work together.

Of course, we Republicans tend to view that problem-solving as less government and Democrats tend to view that problem-solving as more government. That is not universal, but that is where the two sides usually come down. That being the case, MAX and I have often found ourselves on different sides of some of these issues. However, we share the desire to solve problems and, as MAX's sign says it, to put our constituents' interests first. Senator BAUCUS has always understood that notion very well, and I am here to declare that to everybody who listens.

As a result, his disposition—particularly as chairman of the Finance Committee—has been to try to find a way to a bipartisan yes rather than a partisan no. I have always respected him for that.

Over the last few years, as I have served along side MAX as the ranking member of the Finance Committee, I have greatly appreciated his willingness to put partisan differences aside for the greater good of all.

One adjective you could use to describe Senator BAUCUS is one that was used by his predecessor as chairman of the Finance Committee, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The term I am thinking of is "indefatigable."

Whether it was preparing for and running a marathon, walking across the wide expanse of his home State, or working at one of the many jobs he regularly undertook back home on recess visits, MAX has been indefatigable.

He has been a tireless legislator. Just ask his staff. They will affirm that fact. As a Senator, he was always working. I have no doubt he will do the same as our Nation's Ambassador to China, arguably the most important diplomatic post in the world today.

As we saw today, the vote on his confirmation was not even close. That is because all of his colleagues know that MAX BAUCUS is a committed public servant who will serve the American people with competence, dignity, and a tireless commitment to our Nation and its interests.

I have to say I feel personally about this nominee and about this nomination. I like MAX very much. Having served with him on the Senate Finance Committee, he has always tried to be fair. He has always tried to consider the other's point of view. He has always tried to consider different ways of solving problems, and he has worked to do so. That is about all we can ask from our colleagues on the other side—either Democrats or Republicans.

I just want to at this time wish Senator BAUCUS and his lovely wife Melodee and, of course, his family the best of luck in this and all future endeavors.

As MAX departs the Senate, Senator BAUCUS leaves behind a great legacy