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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Gracious and changeless God, the creator of heavenly lights, Your mercies sustain us.

Today, use our Senators to accomplish Your will, making them faithful under trials and resolute when facing the difficult. Lord, even in their sorrowing seasons, motivate them to be transformed by Your liberating grace. Empower them to do the best they are capable of, bringing a harvest of courage, compassion, and service. Give them the wisdom to place their ultimate trust in You.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

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

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 8, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a Senator from the

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MARKEY thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1845, the unemployment compensation legislation. We have no votes scheduled yet. When we are able to work something out in that regard, we will notify all Senate offices.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Mr. REID. Yesterday's vote to advance a measure which is so vitally important to our country—to extend the lifeline to Americans who lost their jobs during this great recession—was a very positive development, but we are a long way from restoring benefits to 1.3 million people who have been looking for work for months, some of them for years.

The few Republicans willing to even debate this measure have already threatened to vote against even a short-term extension unless it is fully paid for.

Let me start by saying I am opposed to offsetting the cost of emergency unemployment benefits—I repeat, emergency unemployment benefits. I don't understand why my Republican colleagues can't read the script from the administration of their President, our President, President Bush. Five times during his time in office—the second

President Bush—we extended emergency unemployment insurance benefits by declaring an emergency, as we should now. We should realize that today there is only one job available for every three people seeking a job. Think about it.

This legislation calls for a 3-month extension. That is all. Let's extend this now and give those people their benefits, and then we will work to see whether we can come up with a long-term solution to this issue. I have heard one of the leaders in the House, one of the Republicans, say we need to do something about opportunities for jobs. We agree. Let's see what we can come up with, but let's extend the benefits for 3 months now.

Through the darkest days of the recession, these unemployment benefits kept millions of Americans from descending into poverty.

I again urge my Republican colleagues in Congress to pass this 3-month extension. It is what the American people want by a vast majority of all political stripes. We need to do this so we can negotiate a long-term solution to this issue. Any lapse or delay in benefits means 1.3 million people will be wondering whether they need to go to borrow money again or to maybe see if they can figure out a way to buy baby formula or gas for their car to go to a job interview if they are fortunate to have a car or a bus ticket.

If Republicans are so interested in paying for this measure, they should propose a reasonable way to do so that doesn't attack the Affordable Care Act or punish American children, as the two proposals they presented yesterday do—go after American children or the Affordable Care Act. They should propose an offset that might actually pass. Instead, they propose a string of political amendments, each more doomed to failure than the last one they offered.

They should also stop masking their reluctance to extend these benefits behind complaints about how many

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



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amendments they have been allowed to offer on this and other legislation. Everyone within the sound of my voice should understand that is hollow. It has become a common refrain for the minority to blame their own frequent obstruction on me. Two Republican Senators held up progress on virtually everything we tried to do under the first term of this Congress. They wouldn't let any other amendments come up unless they got a vote on their amendment.

The fact remains that if my Republican colleagues have complaints about my leadership style, they should also have complaints about Senator Frist, my predecessor. He is a fine man, a Republican leader. We still stay in touch, as I do with the other Republican leader, Senator Lott, whom I worked with very closely. I hear no complaints about their leadership style when they were leading the Senate. During my time as leader, Republicans have offered 7 out of 10 amendments on which the Senate has voted. Seventy percent of the amendments we have voted on in the Senate have been Republican amendments. This has been a greater share than either Senator Frist or Senator Lott offered. During my leadership in the 111th Congress, minority amendments represented a greater share of amendment votes than during any single Congress. Think about it.

So Republicans should stop trying to justify their opposition to helping Americans in need with false claims about what is going on in this institution. Let's start talking about facts rather than fiction—and there is a lot of fiction going around. Republicans should, I repeat, stop trying to justify their opposition to helping Americans in need with false claims about my leadership.

It is quite interesting to note that House Republican leaders—and I am sure they sent a copy of it to the Senate—have instructed colleagues in a written memo. It says: Show compassion for the unemployed.

I say to everyone that we don't need a memo for us to show compassion to the unemployed.

They also say: Treat them as individuals.

Oh yeah? That is not a bad idea, but it will be very difficult for Senate Republicans to seem sympathetic to the plight of the unemployed while still opposing a helping hand for 1.3 million job seekers. It shouldn't take a memo to realize that unemployed Americans—and particularly those who have been out of work for months—deserve our compassion. We don't need a memo for that, a memo saying: Show compassion. No wonder Republicans in Congress are out of touch with Republicans around the country. Republicans around the country support extending unemployment benefits because they have compassion for those Americans who are in trouble.

Being out of work is not only financially devastating, it is heartbreaking.

I recently received a letter from a single mother of two who has lived in Nevada all of her life. She is afraid she will soon be homeless—a single mother. She wrote: "I have no desire to live off the system." She is speaking for virtually everyone we are trying to help. This woman is the rule, not the exception.

To qualify for unemployment is not easy. Someone has to be laid off through no fault of their own, and they have to actively seek work.

These unemployed aren't gaming the system; there simply aren't enough jobs to go around. For every job there are three people trying to get that job. The longer a person is unemployed, the more difficult it becomes to find work. This is not being made up; this is a fact. The long-term unemployed are half as likely as their recently let-go competitors to be hired. But that doesn't stop them from trying. Rather than encouraging these people who are desperate for help to keep looking, cutting off unemployment benefits actually encourages the long-term unemployed to actually drop out of the job market altogether. That doesn't help them, our communities, our States, and our country. It hurts families, it hurts communities, and it certainly hurts the economy.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Yesterday the majority leader rejected my offer for both sides to offer amendments to the unemployment insurance bill—the way things used to work around here; we had a bill called up, and we had amendments. This is, sadly, typical of the way things are these days in this institution. If the majority leader just accepted my offer, we could actually be debating and amending this bill instead of wasting time. How does the majority leader expect to achieve consensus when one side doesn't have the chance to offer any input at all? That is the way the Senate used to operate.

Look. If the majority leader wants this bill to pass the Senate, then there is a very good likelihood he is going to have to find a way to pay for it. I will be offering one idea on that front; that is, paying for a longer extension by dropping the mandate that forces Americans to buy insurance they don't want. But if they don't like that idea, there are others. One is a bipartisan idea endorsed by the President that ensures individuals can't draw both Social Security disability benefits and unemployment benefits at the same time. Senators COBURN and PORTMAN both have versions of that. There is another plan offered by Senator AYOTTE that would cut down on fraud in re-

fundable tax credits. There are plans for job creation that will be offered by Senators PAUL, THUNE, and INHOFE.

These plans take a different approach than the government-led one we see from our Democratic friends. They rely on unlocking the potential of the private sector to actually increase employment. Why don't we have a vote on them in the Senate? I am sure there are many Democratic ideas out there as well, but we won't get the chance to debate any of them as long as the majority leader keeps blocking us from offering amendments.

This obstructionism by the Democratic majority is against the traditions of this body, and it needs to end because if Democrats truly want to get anything done this year, they are going to have to learn how to work with us.

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—MOTION TO PROCEED

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 265, S. 1845, a bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, it has been 11 days since Federal unemployment insurance expired for 1.3 million Americans, and every day more Americans lose their benefits as their 26 weeks of State benefits expire.

I hope my colleagues join Senator HELLER and me in our efforts to swiftly pass this 3-month extension. Many of my colleagues have talked about issues with respect to a longer term piece of legislation, the cost of it, should we pay for it, and are there changes necessary in the program to make it more effective and efficient. Those are thoughtful and worthy considerations, but they should not deprive 1.3 million Americans—and that number is growing each day—basic benefits. These are modest benefits—about \$300 a week—that allow them to just keep their families together, keep trying to search for a job.

I would point out that the only way one qualifies for this benefit is, No. 1, if someone had a job and they lost it through no fault of their own, and they are constant in keeping up the search for work. That is one of the requirements. It is all about work. In this economy, it is all about the fact that there are two or three job seekers for every job. In some parts of the country—in Rhode Island, Massachusetts,