

and we are very grateful for her hard work.

PENSIONS

Mr. President, over the next hour, we will hear from a group of Senators speaking in support of the hundreds of thousands of workers and retirees across the country at risk of losing their pensions. We are here, once again, calling on Congress to enact pension legislation before it is too late.

I thank Senator BALDWIN for helping me organize this block of floor speeches, and I thank Senators HEITKAMP, MANCHIN, KLOBUCHAR, CASEY, and PETERS for their participation today and for their years of hard work in search of a solution. I also want to recognize my friend and colleague Senator BROWN for his tireless leadership on this issue.

If we don't act soon, in my home State of Indiana, nearly 22,000 Teamsters and 2,700 mine workers could face significant pension cuts—and they are not alone. There are nearly 150 multi-employer pension plans listed by the U.S. Department of Labor as in “critical or endangered status.” The failure of those plans would likely lead to the collapse of the Federal pension insurance program—the PBGC—the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation.

Over the last several years I, along with a number of my colleagues, have been calling on the Senate to take action. I helped introduce the Butch Lewis Act, which puts pension plans on solid footing through a new financing option. I also helped introduce the Miners Pension Protection Act, which would ensure the solvency of the United Mine Workers of America pension plan.

I met with Hoosier pension beneficiaries countless times to hear their stories, including hundreds of Teamsters at Local 135 in Indianapolis and dozens of mineworkers in Oakland City. Additionally, I have hosted bipartisan meetings and spoken with the current and previous administrations to push for action now.

Though I wish legislation had already been enacted, Congress did create a joint select committee earlier this year to hopefully craft a legislative solution by the end of the year. That is why I am here—to continue shining a light on this important issue and to push for a solution.

This issue has significant, real-life implications for the thousands of Hoosiers who are affected by it. Don't take my word for it; listen to the heartfelt words of my constituents.

Rex and Cristine in Fort Wayne, IN, wrote:

We both worked really hard for a combined number of 48 years . . . and now to be faced with the possibility of elimination or reduction of our pensions—through no fault of our own—would severely impact our peace of mind and quality of life. . . . A promise is a promise and we, as retirees, need these promises to be honored.

Randy, who is a retiree and Teamster since 1972 in Fort Wayne, IN, wrote:

My entire working career . . . I was promised what I would earn from my pension. . . . Now I am sixty-five years old and have health issues. . . . I need your help to pass the Butch Lewis Act of 2017 . . . that way we can all live the rest of our years with dignity and respect without becoming a burden on anyone.

Steven is a marine veteran from Columbia City, IN. He served from 1971 through 1974. He wrote:

Without my pension, Social Security is my only income. We are not asking for a hand out, only what most of us worked 30 years for. We earned our pension and as a member of Central States Pension fund, the government was already watching over our fund. What happened? Not many of us have anything else to live on. I am 66 years old and cannot replace a lost pension.

Elizabeth, from Fort Wayne, IN, wrote:

My husband and I are both drawing a pension from Central States. Together we worked 45 years without employer contribution to the pension fund. During this time we sacrificed a large amount in hourly wage so our company could contribute to our pension. Since retiring my husband suffered a heart attack and had two knee surgeries. It would be very difficult for him to find work that would replace the lost income if we no longer have our pensions.

Russel from Yoder, IN, wrote:

Without my pension, it will become much more difficult to buy groceries, pay for our medicine . . . my wife and I are both 81 years old. I paid into the pension fund for 41 years and I ask you to protect your constituents by urging the leadership to include the Butch Lewis Act in the agenda.

David, who is also from Fort Wayne, wrote:

We planned on having this pension for 30 years. All those years I worked hard, paid my dues . . . I thought I would be able to secure my family's ability to relax and enjoy retirement and not have to worry about pennies spent . . . this is not cheap and cuts into our Social Security. Our pension helps absorb these added costs for our household money and is not extra money.

Nelson, who is from Andrews, IN, wrote:

I started driving a truck in 1957 and since that time I've driven well over 3.2 million accident-free miles. . . . Now, my wife and I . . . rely on my pension for basic living expenses and to cover medical expenses. If my pension is cut, we'll be unable to make ends meet. We urgently need your help to protect my pension.

Rex and Cristine, Randy, Steven, Elizabeth, Russell, David and Nelson all earned their pensions, and they are just a small representation of the thousands of working families—and everyone has their own story—who are depending on us to do our job and act. They don't want a handout. That is not the American way. That is not the Hoosier way. They did their part. Now it is time for us to help make good on what they were promised.

They don't care about politics. They don't want anything to do with partisanship. They just want us to fix this. That is part of why we were sent here—to solve problems—and it is time to solve this problem now.

Let's reach a solution that allows American workers to retire with the fi-

nancial security they expected and the financial security they earned.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise on behalf of the more than 25,000 workers and retirees in Wisconsin who have paid into the Central States Pension Fund.

If Washington does not act, workers and retirees face massive cuts to the pensions they have earned over decades of work. If Washington does not act, small businesses will be on the hook for a pension liability they cannot afford.

I have been proud to work side by side with Wisconsin workers and retirees and with Senator BROWN, who introduced the Butch Lewis Act, and I have been proud to work with Senator DONNELLY and others to organize this afternoon's opportunity to share the stories of the hard-working people and retirees we represent.

The bill—the Butch Lewis Act—will put failing multiemployer pension plans, including Central States, back on solid ground, and it does so without cutting a single cent from the pension retirees have earned.

I have also introduced legislation to help shore up the government's insurance plan for these pensions. Earlier this year, I shared the stories of Wisconsin retirees who stand to lose more than 50 percent of their pensions if Washington does not act. Since then, nothing has been done. I am here once again to remind my colleagues that this is about a promise that must be kept.

This is about a promise made to Gary, from Marshfield, WI. Gary told me:

We recently got custody of our great grandson, and raising an 8 year old is expensive, more expensive than when our kids were young. If my pension gets cut, it would definitely affect our family.

I relate to Gary's comments because I was raised by my grandparents. I can't imagine raising a great-grandchild. So thank you for doing that. Also, yes, it does cost money, and you need to have the stability of keeping the promises that you were given when you enrolled in Central States Pension.

This is about a promise made to Diane and her husband, from Luxemburg, WI. Diane wrote to tell me:

If my husband loses his pension, we could lose our house. My husband has been through polio, cancer, a knee replacement—and he needs another. He worked hard all his life lifting thousands of pounds every day in a grocery warehouse. We paid into a pension expecting to have a comfortable life in retirement—and now it's at risk of being lost.

This is about a promise we made to Michael, from De Pere, WI, a Vietnam veteran. For over 30 years, Michael was a driver at a local construction business. His wife is a retired nurse. They both worked long hours and are now at the age where finding a new job is not an option. Michael told me:

With increasing costs of living and prescription drugs, losing my pension would leave us in a state of devastation.

This is about a promise made to Randall. Randall is from Suamico, WI. He is a retired truckdriver. Randall told me about long hours on the road and leaving his wife at home to care for their children. In 2015 he received a letter from Central States Pension Fund informing him that his pension would be cut in half.

I can't imagine receiving that sort of devastating news.

Randall is 68 years old, he is in poor health, and he would find it impossible to find another job today. He said:

My wife and I both worked hard our entire lives. Our hard work should have meant a secure retirement, and we are worried sick about the possibility of losing my pension. It is difficult to sleep at night.

If Washington does not act, we will be breaking a promise made to 1.5 million workers and retirees nationwide. Small businesses will make hard decisions to lay off workers or close their doors. Washington needs to act, and we need to do it now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague from Wisconsin for those heartfelt and inspiring remarks. It illustrates the problem—the problem I was talking about with my friend Randy, from Fort Wayne, who said: “My entire career I was promised what I would earn from my pension.”

These are people who every day got up in the dark, worked all day, and went home in the dark so they could take care of their families, so they could meet their obligations.

All of the businesses to which many of these teamster drivers delivered counted on those drivers to be there every day, on time in order to keep their business going, and they always kept their word.

The coal miners from my State were promised by Harry Truman that this pension was a sacred obligation that would be kept, and they counted on President Truman's word and the word of everybody else after that.

They kept the lights on in our country. They helped to make sure that we were able to win wars. They stood up every single day to fight for the red, white, and blue. All they ever asked is for us to keep our word. That is what we need to do.

I am honored to have with us here today my colleague from North Dakota, who fights every single day for the people of her State. We are so blessed to have her with us right now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, this is such an important issue, and those of us who have spent time with any of the workers and those of us who have spent time with small business owners who are deeply concerned about the vi-

ability of their business under a “last man standing” kind of rule completely understand the level of grave concern these Americans are experiencing as a result of the problem with multiemployer pension funds like Central States. It is clear to me that if we fail to act, workers and retirees could, and probably will, see their retirement security disappear. Small businesses across the country could, and probably will, face bankruptcy, and taxpayers would still be left on the hook.

Today we are here to tell the stories and give the voice to the workers, small businesses, and retirees who are most at-risk for losing their pensions after years of hard work and playing by the rules. Today I rise to give a voice to thousands of North Dakota workers and retirees who are at risk of losing their retirement security because of the financial instability of our multiemployer pension system.

The only way to prevent these workers and retirees from losing their pensions is for Congress to act. These men and women did everything right, and they live not just in North Dakota but in almost every State. They played by the rules. They worked for years, if not decades, often in labor-intensive jobs, like coal miners or as workers in the trucking industry, such as UPS package delivery and grocery supply stores. They acted responsibly when they negotiated for and started putting money away in their pensions, taking wage reductions to guarantee that their family had a future.

I also want to point out that when I asked how many of the pensioners who come to my meetings served their country by putting on a uniform to stand up, usually it is about a third to a half of the room. So let's not forget that these are veterans who returned home. They started working in their communities. They took off that uniform and continued to build our communities, and now they are struggling to understand how a government and how a society could be leaving them in this level of uncertainty regarding their economic future.

I want to tell a couple stories of some of the people that I have met. I want you to know that on Saturday, I had a meeting with over 140 workers in Fargo. They came from all over, and their stories were heartbreaking. They couldn't understand, if they did everything right, how in the United States of America they would have their financial viability at risk. I had one man stand up who was 80 years old who told me that he went back to work when he knew there was going to be a problem, and he worked in the oil fields. He said: I am worn out; there is nothing more I can do.

I want to talk about Donna Matson and her husband Mike, who worked as a UPS driver for 30 years in Fargo, a job that had an impact on his time with his family and his health. In 2013 he was diagnosed with a progressive supranuclear palsy, a degenerative dis-

ease that requires regular and expensive speech, physical, and occupational therapies. That pension he put money into was supposed to be there to support his family after Mike's decades of labor. Now, when he needs it most and when his wife Donna needs it most, that pension could be ripped away.

Tina Kramer, from Mandan, was a member of the Teamsters, working as a secretary for the local union for 25 years, through which she earned a pension. Her husband was a member of the Steelworkers and worked for Bobcat for about 30 years as a forklift driver, and he earned a pension. Several years ago, both of them retired. Soon after, Tina's husband suddenly passed away. Tina lost her husband's pension and now relies solely on her pension. Tina has just a little bit of savings, and she has already had to dip into that each month to pay her bills for groceries and property taxes. Should the Central States Fund go bankrupt, it is only going to get worse.

Mark Rothschilder, from Bismarck, gave up a lot to work many long hours as a UPS driver for 27 years. When we say “gave up a lot,” he gave up going to his kids' plays and sports games because he often worked late. Because of the intensive labor of his work, he has had five back surgeries and another rotator cuff surgery, which forced him to retire early. If Congress doesn't act to fix the Central States Pension Fund, he doesn't know if he will be able to pay his healthcare bills.

Mark Lundebey, from Grand Forks, never thought he would be in the position where after 36½ years of driving a semi, putting in 14-hour days, with extensive stretches away from home, he no longer may have his retirement savings. That is the reality. He followed the rules and paid into his pensions throughout his entire career. He tells me that if we don't move legislation to protect his pension soon, he will have to sell his house.

I invite any of our colleagues in this body to call a meeting of the people who have been affected. I serve on the Select Committee on Pensions. At our first meeting, we had a lot of discussion about how difficult solving this problem will be. There was a lot of talk about the math and how we could make the math work and how we could bring this fund back into solvency. I said: That is right. We need to fix the economics of the pension fund, but we cannot ignore our moral imperative.

That moral imperative is to do the right thing, to make sure that, as we are standing there, we realize that, for very, very many—in fact, for hundreds of thousands of citizens of our State—this is life or death. This is the difference between having dignity in retirement and being completely dependent on someone else to help them through. This is at a time that they did nothing wrong, other than to plan for a pension that would work for them, other than to bargain for a pension that would work for them. We cannot

ignore the moral imperative. Yes, we need to fix this, and we need to fix it soon because time is wasting. The longer we wait, the more difficult it is going to be.

I invite all of our colleagues who aren't familiar with this issue to call a meeting or to come to one of our meetings and to look these veterans in the face, look these hardworking people in the face, look at the active folks who don't know if their benefits are already going to be given and available to them, look them in the face and say: It is simply a math problem. Your problem is a math problem.

No, their problem is an American problem. It is a congressional problem. It is an administration problem, and it needs to be fixed. We need to make a commitment to making sure that the people who have worked hard all their lives—the people we talk about every day on this floor—are kept whole and moving in securing their pensions. It is an American imperative.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, I want to thank my friend and colleague from North Dakota, who works nonstop for the people of her State.

We often talk about making sure the things we do in the Senate reward hard work, that they stand up for hard work, that they are focused on making sure there is a fair deal for those, as I mentioned before, who go to work in the dark, who work all day and all evening, and who come home in the dark, and on making sure we keep our word in regard to pensions related to them—to the people who have worked 30, 40 years.

My colleague from Michigan, Senator PETERS, has always been at the forefront of making sure we keep our word, that we do what is right, and that we stand up for the working men and women of Michigan and our country.

I yield to the Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I thank Senator DONNELLY for bringing this issue to the floor. I also thank him for his leadership on this issue. He has fought for Indiana families day in and day out on the Senate floor. They are facing a crisis now as the people of Michigan are facing a crisis. As the Senator spoke about a fair deal, I can say, with a great deal of certainty, that the people of Michigan, just like the people of Indiana, believe a deal is a deal. This is a saying we have all heard, but it is also something on which we should all agree throughout the country.

The American commitment to honoring contracts is part of why our economy is the greatest in the world. Businesses know that if their partners in duly executed deals back out, they have access to the full power of our courts and our legal system to make them whole. This is basic fairness. A deal is a deal. Workers deserve the same fairness. Workers who have banded together to negotiate for pensions during their retirements in exchange for lower upfront pay deserve the pensions they have earned.

Generations of Americans have built their lives around the idea that if you work hard and play by the rules, you will have a fair shot at success. The certainty that hard work will be rewarded empowers Americans to achieve economic security, provide for loved ones, and retire with dignity, but for many Americans who have spent decades working hard, their retirements are now at risk.

Tens of thousands of Michiganders will be denied their hard-earned retirements if Congress does not act to protect the pension benefits they have earned. More than 400,000 Americans, including over 47,000 in Michigan, will face massive cuts to their pensions if the Central States Pension Fund is allowed to fail. Central States is not the only multiemployer pension plan that is on a rapid path to insolvency. As many as 200 financially troubled plans are at risk of being closed while the retirements of 1.5 million Americans hang in the balance.

When Michiganders contact me about this issue, they are frustrated and angry, but more than anything else, they are afraid. They are afraid they will lose their homes. They are afraid they will be unable to afford the healthcare they need. They are afraid they could, one day, become burdens on their adult children.

I appreciate that it is not very easy to share very personal fears, but I would like to share some of the stories I have heard from Michigan retirees and from folks who are hoping to retire soon.

Carl from Menominee would have to sell his house and find a new job he and his aching joints would, hopefully, be able to handle at the age of 72, after 30 years of hard physical labor.

Jan and his wife Thelma, from Deerfield, would lose the home Jan built over 50 years ago with his own two hands. Although Thelma still works and pays into a pension plan, she will not receive the benefits she has earned over the last decade—ever since the troubled plan froze the funds for active workers. For people like Thelma, the uncertainty of pension cuts is quickly becoming a harsh reality.

William from Erie is enduring an 80-percent cut to his pension. He describes it as the worst thing that could have possibly ever happened to him and his wife in their golden years. William is a Navy veteran who drove 120 miles to and from work every day to keep his pension and the promise of a comfortable retirement. The extreme cuts he is facing have forced him to go back to work. He had to overcome multiple barriers to senior employment in order to land a minimum-wage job. The job pays for basic necessities, like electricity, food, and heat, but he still cannot afford health insurance for his wife, who is still more than a year away from qualifying for Medicare.

These Americans made deals with their employers—decades of hard work in exchange for fair earnings and de-

cent retirements. A deal is a deal. We have the FDIC to make sure Americans don't lose their life savings if banks go under. We have federally backed crop insurance to help protect farmers who face unpredictable growing seasons. We even have federally backed mortgage insurance to protect banks if homeowners can't pay their mortgages.

Workers like Carl, Thelma, and William are not asking for handouts. They are asking for the pension benefits they earned, that they bargained for, and that they worked their entire lives to secure. A deal is a deal. We must make this right.

I urge my colleagues to stand up for American workers and support the Butch Lewis Act. We must address pension insolvency without sacrificing workers' hard-earned benefits.

I thank Senator DONNELLY for bringing this issue to the floor. I am with him, and we need to bring our colleagues with us as well.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Michigan, who has so many teamster members who travel back and forth across our respective borders every day, who ride some of the most difficult and dangerous roads in the world, who, on a constant basis, are helping families who may be in trouble on the road, who are helping others whom they see along the way. They are not only professional drivers and other Teamster members; they are people who keep a sharp eye out for others in order to help them if they are in trouble. They keep an eye on every family who is out there on the road and on their fellow drivers. They make America go.

So many auto parts from the Senator's State of Michigan come down to my State of Indiana. So many parts go from my State to his State of Michigan to create jobs, to make America go. We want to tell all of those workers: This is your capital. This is your government. We are the hired help. We work for you. It is our obligation to fix this because promises were made.

President Harry Truman promised our mine workers that their pensions would be protected and that their healthcare would be protected. Those mine workers went down underground and powered our economy and powered our war efforts in World War II, in Korea, in Vietnam. They were there to ensure that when our men and women were overseas, they would have what they needed. Promises were made. It is our obligation to keep them for the Central States Pension Fund and for other pension programs.

As I mentioned before, these are the people who go to work in the dark and come home in the dark, who drive our economy and who make our country the envy of the world. They don't come up with excuses. They make sure all of the other workers in our Nation have all of the goods they need to put cars together, to build planes—to drive our Nation forward, to continue to increase our productivity. That is what these

men and women have done for 30, 40 years, and they have contributed to their pension plans. All they are asking is for a fair deal. It is our job—it is up to us—to make sure we keep that sacred bond, and that is what we will fight to do.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, we are blessed to have with us my friend and colleague from West Virginia, Senator MANCHIN. No one fights harder for the working folks than Senator MANCHIN. No one fought harder to make sure we were able to protect the healthcare benefits of our retired mine workers. We worked together on that nonstop to make sure that promise was kept, and Senator MANCHIN has continued to work nonstop to protect the pensions of these mine workers and of so many others, like of the Central States. Senator MANCHIN has been kind enough to join us this afternoon, and we look forward to his remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, first of all, to my colleague from Indiana, there is nobody who has been a greater ally or greater friend than Senator DONNELLY in some of the fights we have had, basically making sure that there is fairness between business and workers and that workers are treated fairly. We fought for that. Mr. DONNELLY has fought for miners in Indiana, and he brought me into his State to spend time with them, and I appreciate that very much. We will continue to make sure that we get the job done.

This should not be a conversation we are having right now—fighting for miners' pensions. This was all rolled into one bill. The healthcare and pensions were all done at one time. We had a pay-for. We had it worked out. We thought we had an agreement, and it was bipartisan. It came out of the Senate Finance Committee in a bipartisan way. I thank Senator HATCH for taking an interest in leading that.

We will have to go back and fix this now. We have half of the job done and half more to do.

Two weeks ago marked the 1-year anniversary of having a permanent fix for the miners' healthcare, preventing 22,600 coal miners, just in my State alone, from losing their healthcare. Now the Joint Select Committee on the Solvency of Multiemployer Pension Plans, of which I am very proud to be a member, is determined to find a permanent solution for the miners' pensions.

Over 70 years ago, President Harry Truman recognized the importance of the coal that our miners produced for

this country, and he promised that the Government would guarantee that our great coal miners would have those benefits in return for their service. Let me tell you that up until that point in time, my grandparents, on both sides of my family, were coal miners. They both then started little grocery stores. Up until that time, there were no guarantees or benefits. When they said you owed your soul to the company store, that was literally and figuratively correct.

My grandfather lived up until 1927. He worked and loaded coal since he was 9 years old and never got a paycheck. He got scrip. At the end of the pay period, he always owed more than they paid him. So they were fighting for this for many years. It was Harry Truman who finally realized what the coal industry and coal mining had done for America. There has not been a group of people who have ever given more in blood, sweat, and tears in hard labor.

I tell people that they mined the coal that made the steel that built the guns and ships that defended our country and helped to build the Industrial Revolution and really helped to lift the middle class to what it is and what it has been.

It was over 70 years ago that President Truman recognized that importance, and he made sure that would not go unnoticed. He passed a bill with John L. Lewis and, at that time, Senator Krug. He passed a piece of legislation. This was not from taxpayers' money. They basically said that from every ton of coal mined from this day forward by the Mine Workers of America, a percentage of the price of that commodity, of that coal, would go toward their benefits so they would have something.

Let me tell you exactly what we have gotten today. The average miner's pension is \$595. We are not talking about thousands of dollars. Most of this goes to widows whose husbands have passed away. Without this, they don't have a lifeline. In 2022 it goes away.

The agreement was a sacred promise between workers and the country, and it captured the best of America and who we are.

But the multiemployer pension system in the United States is in crisis. As many as 114 multiemployer pension plans, including the United Mine Workers of America 1974 Pension Plan, are expected to become insolvent. The miners' pension fund is up first. We are the first ones on the block. This critical plan, which covers 87,000 retired miners—27,000 in my State alone—and 20,000 fully vested current workers is projected to be totally insolvent by 2022 or sooner. If Congress allows these pension funds to go under, the results will be devastating for retirees and for current employees and the communities these companies and beneficiaries are members of, including those in West Virginia. These financial losses will be felt throughout the communities UMW retires live in and spend money in.

We must work together to prevent this catastrophe and shore up miners' pension plans—pensions they have earned and paid into.

Let me state how most of them became insolvent. It didn't happen until the 1980s, as far as the bankruptcy laws in America. Bankruptcy laws in our great country put the financial institution before the human being who worked for the benefits they earned and paid for. There has to be a correction. There has to be some right done there because these miners and workers all over this country basically leave that money in and pay for their benefits, and, at the end of their work life, it is gone because of some conglomerate or some type of corporate takeover or through a bankruptcy. This can't be tolerated any longer.

We could not have passed a permanent fix for miners' healthcare without the support of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and President Trump. I have spoken to President Trump about this, and he is all for it. He is trying to help the miners. He knows what they have done for the country, and I appreciate his speaking up for coal miners and hard-working people across the country.

We have no better advocates for securing a healthcare fix than the retired miners themselves. They come up here day by day, putting a real face to the families and the challenges they have. They have done this for years. For years they have walked the halls of Congress. They met with all of the Members and their staffs. They worked the phones and wrote letters urging us to keep the promise that was made to them. I stand by them, leading the fight to make sure retired coal miners' pensions will not be taken away too. We are not going to let this happen. I have talked with thousands of West Virginians who will be devastated if they lost their pensions. We received letters from miners and their families about the fear and anxiety that comes with not knowing whether they will be able to pay the mortgage or put food on the table.

If my good friend the Senator from Indiana will indulge me a little longer, I want to read about Ricky, from Hewett, WV. He is worried that if his pension is taken away or reduced, he will not be able to support his family. He said:

As a retired coal miner my family and I rely greatly on these very modest benefits. Losing or even having my pension reduced would cause great hardship on my family. A coal miner's pension is not very much to start with. I am not asking for a handout—only what I earned through years of hard work.

Benny, from Oceana, WV, would have to choose between buying food and paying utility bills. He said:

I only draw a small pension of \$215.96 each month, but if I lose that I will have to decide between food or utility bills. I am an older disabled coal miner with a small social security check. The loss of my pension check would be devastating.

Judy, from Sharples, is worried that if she lost her late husband's pension, she and her grandson wouldn't be able to make it. These are basically people who have become second parents because the parents have become dysfunctional. She wrote:

I'm not a rich person, but if I lose my late husband's pension I will lose everything I have. My husband worked 30 plus years at the mines with the promise that we would be taken care of. Yes, I get Social Security but that won't cover my regular bills by itself, not to mention home and car insurance plus taxes. . . .

After securing healthcare benefits for retired miners, we proved that Congress can work together and put partisan politics aside. This was truly done in a bipartisan way. It is a philosophy that I followed throughout my life in public service and in the West Virginia State Legislature, as the Governor of the great State of West Virginia, and now as a U.S. Senator representing the great State of West Virginia.

The coal miners are among the hardest working people in America, and they spent their lives empowering the Nation and keeping it the strongest in the world.

I will leave you with this. When people ask: Where are you from? Let me tell you where I am from. I am from a little State that has the most patriotic people in the Nation. They have fought in every war and conflict and shed more blood and lost more lives for the cause of freedom than most any State. They have done the heavy lifting, mining the coal, making steel, and building the guns and ships that defend us every day.

The Good Lord has been so kind to us. He gave us a great venue, my State of West Virginia. We hope you come, and when you do, we hope you stay.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, we are so fortunate to have such a fighter for the people of West Virginia in Senator MANCHIN. We are grateful for his hard work.

We have another amazing fighter for the people of the State of Minnesota, Senator KLOBUCHAR. Senator KLOBUCHAR has fought nonstop on this issue as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, thanks to my friends from West Virginia and Indiana. I thank Mr. DONNELLY for his leadership and bringing us together today.

Minnesota, like Indiana, has so many people who are in the Central States Pension Fund. Like Senator DONNELLY, I believe that promises made should be promises kept. Over 10 million Americans participate in a multiemployer pension plan and rely on those benefits for a safe and secure retirement.

The Central States Pension Fund was established in 1955 to help truckers

save for retirement. As Senator DONNELLY knows, coming from Indiana—a State where there are a lot of truckers—there are a lot of truckers still in this pension plan. Today the Central States Pension Fund includes workers from the carhaul, tankhaul, pipeline, warehouse, construction, clerical, food processing, dairy, and trucking industries.

I have heard from people all over my State. Fred, from Hibbing, worked 33 years as a bread man and serves as a caregiver for his wife who has serious back problems and was recently diagnosed with leukemia.

Daniel from St. Michael worked over 41 years as a mechanic. If he were to face a reduction in his pension, he would likely be forced to sell the house he has lived in since 1973.

Sue, from Elk River, wrote about her husband Jim, who retired in 1998 and passed away in 2013. Jim left Sue a spousal benefit pension that was supposed to take care of her for the rest of her life. Sue writes that Jim's passing was "devastating enough on its own," but now she fears being forced into the labor market as a woman in her seventies, just to make ends meet.

These are just a few of the examples. Unless Congress acts, hundreds of thousands of participants in the Central States Pension Fund face the real possibility that their hard-earned pensions could be reduced. Many of these are from the Midwest. That is why it is called the Central States Pension Fund.

We need to find a workable solution for underfunded multiemployer pension plans. I know Senator BROWN is leading a group that is working on that—the joint committee working together—to find a solution they can present to the American people.

We all know that delay only makes the solution more costly. The time is here. It has arrived. We can't put it off any more. We must move forward now to get this done. I thank Senator DONNELLY for his leadership.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from Minnesota. She has been a nonstop advocate for folks across her State and across the country. Another nonstop advocate has been my friend and colleague from Pennsylvania, Senator CASEY, who works tirelessly not only on behalf of the Keystone State but on behalf of working families all across America.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Thank you, Mr. President. I rise, first of all, to thank Senator DONNELLY for his leadership and my colleagues.

I am speaking today on behalf of hundreds of thousands of people in Pennsylvania who currently rely or will rely upon a pension. The multiemployer pension program protects about 10 million workers and retirees in

about 1,400 pension plans across the country. In Pennsylvania, that number is 230 multiemployer pension plans, with a total of about 910,000 beneficiaries. Without action, the full pensions of over 33,000 Pennsylvanians are at risk, as is the solvency of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. In 2017 the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation paid \$462 million to Pennsylvanians whose pension plans had failed. That is about \$5,800 on average.

Democrats in the Senate have been fighting to preserve these earned benefits for our retirees for years, including our Nation's coal miners. The fight for our coal miners we have just half-won. We were successful in making sure that their promised healthcare benefits are there for them, but we still have work to do with regard to pensions.

It is inexcusable that Americans who have earned these benefits have to worry, as some do, and they have been worrying for many years.

We know what the tax bill did, among many things, for very wealthy interests. The tax bill that got rammed through the Senate in December of last year gave \$13 billion in tax windfalls to our Nation's six largest banks. That is \$13 billion for 1 year—this year alone—and they are all unpaid for. So the debt goes up. Six big banks get \$13 billion, and yet this body, the Senate, can't deliver on the promise of pensions to hundreds of thousands across the country.

Let me give you three quick examples in the limited time we have. Debbie, from Western Pennsylvania, wrote about the miners pension act. She said in part, talking about her family: "We depend on my dad's pension to survive on the limited income." So said Debbie from Western Pennsylvania.

Dennis, also from Southwestern Pennsylvania, drove a truck for 25 years of his life, "working long hours away from my family," he said, "to provide a good living." He said: "I . . . would appreciate it if you could do whatever you can to preserve that pension for my wife and for me."

Stuart from Northeastern Pennsylvania—the corner of the State I live in—is a bakery and confectionary union pensioner. He said:

Please help save our BCTGM pension fund. I paid into that pension system for 26 years and depend on it greatly. I work three jobs and my wife works two jobs. We have put one child thru college and one just entered.

None of these families should have to worry about these earned benefits—this measure of retirement security, so we have a long way to go. But I am grateful that we are willing to work together on both sides of the aisle, and I am especially grateful that Democrats have been united in finally keeping that promise to those who have earned these benefits, those who have earned these pensions.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleagues from Pennsylvania and Minnesota, who are still in the Chamber with us right now. Their focus has always been on honoring hard work, on making sure that we keep our word to the truckdriver who has paid in every day, who is riding down the Pennsylvania Turnpike or the Schuylkill Expressway or heading up I-35 in Minnesota and that we keep the promise that was made to them after 30, 35 years of hard work, of driving, of trying to keep people safe, of making a difference, of delivering the food people have to eat, the parts people have to put together at work to make sure our country can continue to move forward. Those are the folks we are talking about.

If either of my colleagues would like to say anything else in regard to the amazing, hard work of the miners in Pennsylvania or the teamsters in Minnesota—those are the folks, the Central States Pension Fund and so many other pension funds, as well, that we fight for every single day to try to get this done because, as the Senator from Pennsylvania said, this is a job that is half done right now. We were able to make sure we protected the healthcare benefits that were promised.

There was a miner and his wife with whom I spent time in Oakland City, IN, down in Gibson County where we have so many coal mines. When I saw him, he said: This is one of the greatest days for me when we were able to keep healthcare benefits.

He said: "It's not for me. It's because my wife, who is ill"—and they are both in their eighties—"can now get her medicine again next week." That is what his concern was. It wasn't about himself. It was about his wife and making sure, with the pain she was struggling with and the healthcare problems that she had, that he was able to make sure she would be OK.

That is our job; it is to back up the word that was given to him because he spent his life working nonstop to keep our country moving forward, and all he asked in return is that we keep our word.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TAX REFORM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the future for American workers is looking bright. A combination of tax reform, which we passed in December, plus other economy-boosting measures, such as lifting burdensome regulations, is starting to produce the kind of economy we need to give Americans access to a future of security and prosperity.

Our goal with tax reform was pretty simple: Make life better for American

workers. That involved a couple of things. For starters, it involved putting more money in Americans' pockets right away by cutting their taxes, and that is what we did. We cut tax rates across the board, nearly doubled the standard deduction, and doubled the child tax credit. Americans are already seeing this relief in their paychecks, but we knew that tax cuts, as helpful as they are, weren't enough.

We needed to make sure that Americans had access to good jobs, good wages, and good opportunities—the kinds of jobs and opportunities that would set them up for security and prosperity for the long term. Since jobs and opportunities are created by businesses, that meant reforming our Tax Code to improve the playing field for businesses so they could improve the playing field for their workers, and that is what we did. I am pleased to report that it is already working.

Less than 5 months into the new tax law, business after business has announced good news for workers—pay increases, bonuses, better benefits, like increased retirement benefits, like new and better education benefits, and enhanced parental leave benefits. So far we have more than 530 examples of businesses making things better for their workers and customers, from giant corporations like Apple to small businesses like the Don Ramon restaurant in West Palm Beach, FL.

Economic indicators are looking good. Last month, the unemployment rate hit its lowest level since 2000. That is right; the last time unemployment was this low, the iPod hadn't even been introduced yet.

Economic growth is on a solid track. The economy's growth rate in the first quarter of 2018 was nearly double what it was during the same period last year.

Small businesses are thriving. The president of the National Federation of Independent Business reports:

Small and independent business owners are notably confident about the economy. They are reporting that sales are strong, profits are good, and employee compensation is increasing. And many are setting into motion plans to expand.

That, again, is from the president of the National Federation of Independent Business. That is borne out by NFIB's recent survey data, which shows the net percentage of businesses raising worker compensation over the last 3 months has increased to 33 percent—the highest level since 2000. That is good news for American workers.

Americans had a tough time during the last administration. Our economy stagnated, and American families struggled. But our economy—and our country—are coming back, and they are coming back stronger than ever.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and other policies we have passed are creating an economy that will allow families to access the jobs, the wages, and the opportunities they need for security today and for prosperity tomorrow. The future is indeed looking brighter.

NET NEUTRALITY

Mr. President, I also want to take a moment to discuss the partisan net neutrality resolution that we will be taking up this week. There is support among Senators of both parties for passing net neutrality legislation, and Democrats know that. But instead of moving forward with bipartisan discussions on a net neutrality bill, certain Democrats decided they wanted to play politics. So instead of bipartisan legislation this week, we are taking up a partisan resolution that will do nothing to provide a permanent solution on the issue of net neutrality.

For most of its existence, the internet thrived under a light regulatory touch from Washington, DC. Washington avoided weighing down the internet with burdensome regulations, and the internet flourished as a result, becoming a vehicle for an endless stream of innovation and economic growth.

During the Obama administration, Democrats became convinced that we needed to heavily increase the Federal Government's role, so the Obama FCC reclassified the internet under a regulatory regime that was developed more than 80 years ago to govern monopoly telephone services. That decision posed a number of problems for the future of the internet. For starters, heavy-handed government regulations tend to stifle the kinds of growth and innovation that have always flourished around the internet.

There was also serious reason to be concerned that this new regulatory regime would discourage companies from investing in upgrades to their networks and infrastructure to expand access to broadband. That is a big concern for my State of South Dakota, where too many individuals still lack reliable internet access. In fact, the FCC has since found that the decision to regulate the internet under the 1934—that is right, 1934—telephone regulatory regime has slowed investment, which has restricted the improvement of internet services for rural Americans like those I represent in South Dakota.

In response to these problems, the FCC recently decided to restore the light-touch regulatory regime that the internet had thrived under and which had been in place for two decades prior to 2015 under administrations from both political parties. That, in turn, created the opportunity for us to adopt net neutrality legislation to permanently address concerns about blocking, throttling, and paid prioritization—and to deal with these concerns under a regulatory regime suitable for the 21st century internet. So that is why the FCC went back to the light-touch regulatory regime, rather than the heavyhanded 1934 law that would treat the internet like a Ma Bell-type public utility.

Instead of taking this opportunity to work with Republicans to develop bipartisan legislation, Democrats have decided to play politics. The internet,