

now crumbling for too many. Imagine what it would be like to have to cut your family budget 50 percent or 60 percent or even 70 percent and still get the bills paid and keep food on the table.

I talked to a gentleman from Michigan named John who lives in Monroe. He doesn't have to imagine that because he and his family are living that every day. John is a retired diesel mechanic whose pension benefits were slashed 72 percent. For any one of us, imagine if our incomes were slashed 72 percent. That started for him in January 2018.

As you can only imagine, the past 2 years have been a tremendous hardship for him and for his family. They have been using their savings, as he said to me, to pay the bills for the past 2 years. They have cut everything non-essential and are now cutting even the essentials from their budget. John and Kathy, his wife, used to be able to help out their children, including a son who is disabled, but they no longer have the means to do that, which is something that is really devastating for them.

John said: "The mental strain and anxiety we are enduring because of the loss of a guaranteed income has become increasingly difficult."

Kathy added that it is hard for people to understand what it is like to live on just one-quarter of the income that one used to have.

Kathy and John aren't alone. That is why we are on the floor. That is why we are asking—demanding—that action be taken on their behalf. Between 1 million and 1.5 million American workers and retirees are in pension plans that are at serious risk of becoming insolvent within the next 20 years. As well, by the end of this year, as Senator MANCHIN said, more than 1,200 coal miners and their family members could lose their healthcare coverage.

These hard-working Americans deserve better than this. Right now, they are just waiting and waiting and waiting for the U.S. Senate to act—for the Senate majority leader and the Republican majority to decide it is important to act on their behalf. It has now been 83 days since the House of Representatives passed the Rehabilitation for Multiemployer Pensions Act—83 days. We have plenty of time to take this up on the Senate floor. We have plenty of time to take it up. There needs to be a sense of urgency about doing it because John and Kathy certainly feel that sense of urgency as they are trying to pay the bills and do what they can to support their children. They feel that every day.

This bill is the companion legislation to what we have called the Butch Lewis Act. Thanks to Senator BROWN for introducing this important legislation, I am proud to be a cosponsor along with many of my colleagues. It has also been 285 days, as Senator MANCHIN said, since Senators MANCHIN, KAINE, WARNER, BROWN, JONES, and CASEY introduced the American Miners Act. So we have two bills in front of

us—one that has been held up now for 285 days and one that has been held up for 83 days. We need to have action.

The American Miners Act secures retired miners' pensions and saves their healthcare benefits. It is past time for Senate Majority Leader MCCONNELL to stop stalling and to take action on behalf of the folks who did nothing more than work their whole lives, created the middle class of this country, and believed their country and believed the companies when they said, if they paid into pensions, they would be there. Hard-working American families have been waiting way too long.

I have always believed that a pension was a promise. It is just plain and simple. It is a promise, and it is a promise that deserves to be kept. People like John, who have worked hard to earn their retirement benefits, shouldn't have to worry about paying their power bills, putting food on their tables, or keeping their homes. They should know that their pensions will be there for them—the pensions they paid into all the time they were working. They have earned them over a lifetime of work, and those pensions are promises that need to be kept.

I urge my Republican colleagues to join us in helping to keep that promise for John and for the hard-working Americans like him. We could do this very quickly this week if we would come together and have a sense of urgency about what is affecting folks who have worked hard all of their lives, who are now retired, and who just need to know that those pensions are going to be there for themselves and their families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 27

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be discharged from the further consideration of S. 27, the American Miners Act of 2019; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, let me give a short explanation.

The issues facing miners' pension plans are of critical importance, but I have to tell my colleagues that so are the issues that face a large number of multiemployer plans, and one of the biggest that is of concern is the Central States Pension Plan.

Since last year, the Committee on Finance has been working on a bipartisan basis to address the issues that face the multiemployer system. We are nearing the completion of a comprehensive proposal that will include

financial assistance to the critical and declining multiemployer pension plans and will provide long-term solvency to these plans and to the longer term solvency of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, or, as we know it around here, the PBGC. That proposal will include financial relief for miners and mining companies because the situation with the miners' pensions should be handled in the context of these broader, multiemployer plan reforms.

The Senator from West Virginia is a person with whom I work very often and like personally, but I must object to this and take the course of action of dealing with this in a larger context rather than just for miners' pensions, so I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, if I could respond briefly to the Senator from Iowa, the reason for my request, as far as its being urgent, is that we are on the cusp of having one major coal company go bankrupt. As we speak right now, it is out there trying to restructure, but if it declares bankruptcy, our timetable on our miners' pensions moves from 2022 to 2020. If the miners go down first, it will create a whole tumbling effect with the others. This one can keep us from going into insolvency with the PBGC. All we are trying to do is to prevent that from happening because this is going to move very quickly, unfortunately, if this one large coal company goes bankrupt.

That is why I brought it to the floor today, sir, with all due respect.

I hope the Senator and I will talk some more about this and that he will understand the gravity of what we are dealing with because it is really concerning to me right now.

I thank the Senator.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I heard what my friend said. I still stick by what I told him, which is that we are working on a plan to deal with multiemployers in many different situations of which the Senator's is a very important part.

Mr. MANCHIN. I respect that, sir.

I look forward to working with the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

PENSIONS

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

It has been 3½ years since the Treasury Department denied an application by the Central States Pension Fund to slash pensions that had already been earned by thousands of plan members. In that time, retirees have organized at home. They have called on their Members of Congress. They have also come to Washington countless times—all to remind us of the promises they were made when they earned their pensions and to fight for a solution to this looming crisis.

I have been proud to work side by side with Wisconsin workers and retirees and with Senator BROWN to introduce the Butch Lewis Act. This legislation will put failing multiemployer pension plans, including Central States, back on solid ground, and it does so without cutting the pensions retirees have earned.

(The remarks of Ms. BALDWIN pertaining to the introduction of S. 2598 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Ms. BALDWIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today as well to talk about pensions, as so many of my colleagues have been—and not just talking about but acting to advance legislation with regard to pensions.

As we have heard today—and we will keep saying this because it bears repeating—pensions are a promise. They are a promise of a secure retirement. When a worker enters into that promise with a company, when the Federal Government is involved, we have to make sure we keep the promise to workers, just as we did a couple of years ago, after a lot of hard work, to make sure healthcare was there for coal miners who were retired.

Pensions are an issue that both Houses of Congress have a responsibility to act on.

The House passed the Butch Lewis Act 3 months ago, but like a lot of legislation that has come from the House, it is sitting in the Senate day after day, week after week and in this case 3 months—3 months—since passage in the House. It is time for the U.S. Senate to have a vote on the Butch Lewis Act.

In Pennsylvania, and I know this is true of several other States, we are talking about coal miners, teamsters, bakery and confectionary workers who, through no fault of their own, are seeing their hard-earned pensions threatened. Failure to act could result in devastating economic consequences across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and across our Nation.

Just think about it this way, in terms of Pennsylvania: One estimate has it that over 60,000 pensions—60,000—including 11,831 coal miners, 21,460 teamsters as part of that larger number—could be at risk.

Despite the challenges ahead, the good news is, we have bipartisan legislation that I mentioned a moment ago, the Butch Lewis Act, which passed the House 3 months ago.

Senator BROWN of Ohio and others have worked hard to make sure this effort on pensions is in front of the agenda in the Senate.

The Butch Lewis Act will create a loan program for troubled pensions. It is a commonsense solution that brings the public sector and the private sector together to address this looming crisis for workers.

We must also pass legislation so we can address the coal miners' healthcare and coal miners' pension crises. Senator MANCHIN from West Virginia has shown great leadership in this process over many years.

We also owe thanks to the Members of the U.S. Senate Democratic caucus. Few, if any, have coal miners in their States, but because of a concerted effort in the Democratic caucus, we have made coal miners and their healthcare and retirements and their pensions a priority. Those Democratic Senators stood with Senators like me from States that have a large number of retired coal miners because it is the right thing to do. Those Democratic Senators know it is the right thing to do. Some Republican Senators do as well.

It is the right thing to do because, as I started with, pensions are a promise, and we have to make sure we keep our promise to those workers.

Thousands of Pennsylvania families are counting on us, and many more thousands of American families across the board outside of Pennsylvania are counting on us to keep our promise on pensions and to make sure we continue to fight until that promise is kept to our workers and to their families.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MCSALLY). 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, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Barbara McConnell Barrett, of Arizona, to be Secretary of the Air Force.

Mitch McConnell, Martha McSally, Rick Scott, John Thune, Mike Crapo, Lamar Alexander, Johnny Isakson, John Cornyn, Roy Blunt, Roger F. Wicker, John Hoeven, Mike Rounds, Kevin Cramer, Steve Daines, John Boozman, Cindy Hyde-Smith, James E. Risch.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that the nomination of Barbara McConnell Barrett, of Arizona, to be Secretary of the Air Force, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARNER), and the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO), are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 84, nays 7, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 314 Ex.]

YEAS—84

Baldwin	Graham	Portman
Barrasso	Grassley	Reed
Blackburn	Hassan	Risch
Blunt	Hawley	Roberts
Boozman	Heinrich	Romney
Braun	Hoeven	Rosen
Brown	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Burr	Inhofe	Rubio
Cantwell	Isakson	Sasse
Capito	Johnson	Schatz
Cardin	Jones	Schumer
Carper	Kaine	Scott (FL)
Casey	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cassidy	King	Shaheen
Collins	Lankford	Shelby
Cornyn	Leahy	Sinema
Cortez Masto	Lee	Stabenow
Cotton	Manchin	Sullivan
Cramer	McConnell	Tester
Crapo	McSally	Thune
Cruz	Menendez	Tillis
Daines	Moran	Toomey
Durbin	Murkowski	Udall
Enzi	Murphy	Van Hollen
Ernst	Murray	Warner
Feinstein	Paul	Whitehouse
Fischer	Perdue	Wicker
Gardner	Peters	Young

NAYS—7

Blumenthal	Markey	Wyden
Duckworth	Merkley	
Gillibrand	Smith	

NOT VOTING—9

Alexander	Coons	Klobuchar
Bennet	Harris	Sanders
Booker	Hirono	Warren

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 84, and the nays are 7.

The motion is agreed to.

The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture motions for the Volk, Eskridge, Novak, and Kovner nominations ripen at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, October 16; I further ask that notwithstanding rule XXII, that at 4:15 p.m. tomorrow, all postcloture time on the Barrett, Volk, Eskridge, Novak, and Kovner nominations be considered expired; finally, I ask that if any of the nominations are confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

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