

worry about paying bills or providing health care for her children, largely because of the benefits the union negotiated for its members.

Collective bargaining for TSA employees will not endanger national security. It will make us more safe. I urge colleagues to support collective bargaining for TSA employees. It will improve our ability to recruit and retain the best employees, like Donnie McIntyre and the countless other American heroes who work every day to protect us and keep us safe under collective bargaining agreements. Moreover, smart collective bargaining for TSA employees will increase stability and professionalism in the workplace and will dramatically reduce attrition rates, job dissatisfaction, and increased costs, which will enhance transportation security.

I urge my colleagues to swiftly confirm John S. Pistole to be the TSA Director and to understand the importance of protecting all of our workers, particularly those who put their lives on the line for us, by giving them basic collective bargaining rights.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa is recognized.

(The remarks of Mr. GRASSLEY pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 562 are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Since I do not see any other Members present to speak, 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. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

ORDER FOR RECESS

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. today.

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

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND COBRA BENEFITS

Mr. BURRIS. Madam President, near the end of May, we learned that the un-

employment rate in my home State of Illinois had fallen to about 10.8 percent, down from 11.2 percent in March. That is the first time the unemployment rate has gone down since 2006, when it stood at only 4.4 percent.

I am the first to celebrate the creation of even a single well-paying job. I am happy for each and every Illinoisan we can put back to work because one job will help someone put food on the table, and it will help one family stand just a little taller. It will give people the opportunity to participate in the economy again, buying the goods and services they need.

That, in turn, means more jobs. One by one, these folks will turn our economy around from the bottom up. So I do not dismiss this recent jobs report. This is a step in the right direction. It is welcome news. But it is only a drop in the bucket. For every person we have put back to work, many others are still hurting—and hurting badly.

Our landmark stimulus law, which we enacted more than a year ago, has done a great deal to stop the economy from collapsing and set Americans back on the road to recovery. The economy is growing again. Many key indicators have turned around. I am proud to say the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has been instrumental in preventing a second Great Depression.

But job creation continues to lag behind. We have made progress in some areas, but we still have a long way to go. That is why I urge my colleagues to come together and support job creation measures so we can keep putting people back to work.

At the same time, I urge them to support further extensions of unemployment and COBRA benefits so we can help people keep their heads above water until the recovery is complete.

These are difficult times. Through no fault of their own, millions of people have suddenly found themselves without a job. These folks are the victims of reckless behavior on Wall Street, but they, rather than Wall Street, have been forced to pay the price.

More Americans are classified as "long-term unemployed" and "disadvantaged workers" than ever before. Many have exhausted their unemployment benefits or they are dangerously close to doing so.

I believe we must pass this extenders package and restore stability by helping States cover the rising cost of unemployment insurance.

We need to increase access to COBRA so that people can remain on their old health insurance for a period of time after they lose their jobs.

We need to extend these benefits to more hard-working Americans who are struggling to find work during this time of uncertainty.

Just last month, after a long partisan battle, we passed a temporary extension of these programs. But that extension expired on June 2, almost a month ago. So it is time to take up a new

measure that will carry unemployment benefits and COBRA through at least another 6 months—I would love to see more time—as our friends in the House of Representatives have discussed. This proposal would make more Americans eligible for existing benefits. It would not increase the current 99-week limit on these programs, but it would offer a helping hand to those who have lost their jobs recently and make sure they have access to the same resources.

This extension would not be a comprehensive fix, but it would help ease the situation and the strain on the victims of this financial crisis until the full effects of our stimulus law have taken hold and the unemployment rate begins to decline at a steady rate.

This extenders package will provide needed relief to those who need it most. That is why I am deeply disappointed that some of my colleagues have proposed cuts to this legislation. Some say we should cut \$25 a week in extra unemployment compensation.

Relative to the overall legislation, these cuts would be minimal. But to a family who has been hit hard by this crisis, \$25 a week could make a tremendous difference. Some will say we cannot afford to provide these benefits in light of our continued recovery. But what do I say? I say we cannot afford not to.

We cannot afford to nickel and dime these people who are barely scraping by as it is. We need to give them the support they deserve. Let's dispense with this hollow rhetoric about fiscal responsibility from those who have lost their credibility on this issue.

Over the last decade, Republicans squandered our surplus by spending wildly on massive tax breaks for the wealthy and the special interests, a war not paid for, and a medical program not paid for. During the years when they were in control, Senate Republicans voted seven times to increase the debt limit. They refused to pay for major initiatives, they cut revenue, and they increased spending.

It doesn't take a financial expert to recognize that this is just plain irresponsible. It is easy to say their record simply does not match their rhetoric.

Let's be honest with the American people. Let's work together to solve this problem rather than hiding behind the same irresponsible policies that got us here in the first place.

I recognize that job creation must remain our top priority, and I am confident that Democrats and Republicans can agree we need to help people get back to work. In the meantime, let's pass this extension so that folks can get food on the table and get access to the medical care they need. Let's stand up for those who have been hit hardest by this crisis and send them a message loud and clear: We haven't forgotten you and, hopefully, help is on the way.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

Mr. SPECTER. I ask unanimous consent that I may speak for up to 20 minutes.