

amendment; that the Toomey amendment be subject to a 60-affirmative-vote threshold; and upon disposition of the Toomey amendment, the substitute amendment, as amended, be agreed to; and the Senate proceed to vote on the motion to invoke cloture on S. 815, as amended; that if cloture is invoked, the time until 1:45 p.m. be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees; that at 1:45 p.m., all postcloture time be yielded back, the bill be read a third time and the Senate proceed to vote on passage of the bill, as amended; finally, if cloture is not invoked, I be recognized.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I appreciate everyone's cooperation. This is how we should do legislation, work together. This is something we have done together and I appreciate everyone's work. It has not been easy for everyone. Not everybody is satisfied, but a lot of people are satisfied.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I now ask unanimous consent we proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, until 7 p.m.

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

Mr. REID. 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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

THANKING SENATOR MERKLEY

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, before the Senator from Oregon leaves the floor, I wish to thank him for his leadership on this bill. He picked up the mantle from our dear late colleague Senator Ted Kennedy. Senator MERKLEY had worked on this issue in his home State before coming to the Senate, and we have worked very closely together as this bill has been on the floor. He has been very fair and open-minded. Although we were not able to work out agreements on everything, as I would have hoped, I do believe there was a good-faith effort which was evident in the passage of Senator PORTMAN's amendment.

I am very excited that tomorrow we will be reaching final passage, and Senator MERKLEY deserves an enormous amount of credit for his leadership. I wanted to thank him while he was still present on the floor and also tell him how much I appreciated his kind words earlier today.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THANKING STAFF

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, tomorrow we will take a vote on Senator TOOMEY's amendment and on cloture and final passage. There may not be time, as we are wrapping up the work on this bill, for me to pay tribute to some very valuable individuals who worked very hard on this bill; that is, the members of the staff on both sides.

I wish to particularly commend three members of my staff—John Kane, Katie Brown, and Betsy McDonnell—who have literally worked night and day to try work out amendments and procedure with a wide variety of staff on both sides of the aisle.

Our staffs are often the unsung heroes of this institution, and in this case I was receiving emails from my staff—for instance last night at 1:46 a.m.—giving me the latest updates. I just wish to publicly thank them, the floor staff on both sides, the HELP Committee staff, and everyone who was involved but particularly the three members of my staff, John, Katie, and Betsy, who have literally devoted countless hours to this bill. I know they will be very happy when we reach final passage tomorrow.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SECURITY ACT OF 2013

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, this past Monday I visited a senior center in Youngstown, OH, and met with seniors and others, talking about what they hear as threats to Social Security. They hear some of the wise people in this town, if you will—some of the people on television and the political pundits and the economists and the newspaper editorial boards—saying that we need to restructure entitlements or reform entitlements, and that scares them because they don't get very specific. They often, in those statements about reforming entitlements, don't—the people saying it and the reporters asking the questions don't really scratch underneath the surface and say: What does that really mean? It usually means cutting Social Security benefits, but more on that in a second.

I spoke with a woman named Gloria, a 70-year-old widow, currently living in

subsidized housing. She has lived on Social Security since her husband's death. Her benefits barely cover the costs of housing and groceries, not to mention health care. She told me that without Social Security, she would not know what to do to be able to get along in her life.

We owe it to our children and our grandchildren to deal with this Nation's deficit. That means everything from eliminating farm subsidies—the directed payments we are doing in the farm bill, and Senator THUNE and I wrote the language to do that. It means closing the carried interest loophole for Wall Street hedge fund managers. It means eliminating tax breaks for oil companies and stopping the idiotic—for want of a better term—practice of encouraging and enticing, through the Tax Code, companies to actually invest overseas, so that if you shut down a plant in Steubenville or Toledo and move it to Wuhan or Xi'an, China, you actually can get tax breaks to do that.

I am a grandfather a couple of times and about to be a third time. I guess as we get older, we look at the world, not surprisingly, from a different perspective. I see, because of Social Security and Medicare, that hundreds of thousands, millions of Americans get to spend more time with their children and grandchildren. That is because of Social Security and Medicare. Forty-five years ago, before Medicare, 48 years ago, half of America's seniors did not have health insurance. Today, 99 percent have it. We know that means people live longer, healthier lives. It means not just that they get to see their grandchildren, which is the pleasure and the delight of almost all grandparents, it also means they get to impart their wisdom and knowledge and values to their grandchildren.

Margaret Mead once said wisdom and knowledge are passed from grandparent to grandchild, because there is this sort of natural tension—or there might be—between children and parents, but between grandchildren and grandparents it makes for a richer society. Because of these two Social Security programs, Medicare and Social Security, we are a richer, better country.

Today, 63 million Americans receive Social Security benefits. In my State it is 2 million. Let me give a couple of statistics, because this is really a moral question of what we do with our retirement system. For two-thirds of seniors, Social Security is more than half of their income in my State and in the State of the Senator from New Hampshire, who is sitting here. In the State of the Senator from Connecticut it is not much different. No State is much different from this. Social Security provides more than half of the income for about two-thirds of seniors. For more than one-third of seniors, Social Security provides essentially 90 percent, or all, of their income. For one-third of seniors, without Social Security, they would have zero or close to zero income.

It lifts 15 million Americans out of poverty. In my home State of Ohio, if Social Security did not exist, almost half of seniors would live in poverty.

Looking forward, improving Social Security's adequacy is the best way to address the retirement crisis. That is why I am working with Senator HARKIN and Senator BEGICH and Senator HIRONO and Senator SCHATZ on the Strengthening Social Security Act.

My colleagues will talk about strengthening Social Security, but what do they mean by that? They usually mean that strengthening Social Security means we make cuts in benefits. Those cuts in benefits can be raising the retirement age, it can be something called the chained CPI, which is cutting the Social Security cost-of-living adjustment. It can mean some kinds of means testing, so people get less, if they are a little wealthier. It can mean a whole host of things, but each of them is a cut to Social Security.

So the debate here seems to be not: How do we make seniors' lives better—when a third of seniors on Social Security get almost all their income from Social Security. And they are not doing that great with Medicare either. With some of the copays and the deductibles and all that, some get some help that way. But the debate should not be all about cutting Social Security—which it really is, this whole strengthening. We have to strengthen Social Security, is the way they talk about it. We have to reform entitlements. We have to worry about the sustainability of Social Security and Medicare, and I do worry about them. But the fix is not to debate cutting these programs and giving these seniors less.

As the Presiding Officer knows, defined pension benefits are less than they used to be. Fewer and fewer people retiring now have defined pension benefits. Unless they have a government job or a good union job, fewer and fewer have retirement benefits. Fewer people are able to save money because we know in the last decade savings rates have gone down because incomes—while the wealthy have done better and better and better, profits have gone up and up and up, productivity in the workforce has gone up and up and up—wages have decoupled with that. They have not kept up. That means people are saving less.

So originally as to Social Security, you would have Social Security, you would have a pension, and the third of the three-legged stool is you had savings. Well, now the savings and the pension—whether it is a 401(k) or a defined pension—are less than they used to be. So Social Security is more important.

So why are we even discussing the whole idea of cutting Social Security? That is why we need a fairer COLA to start with. The Harkin bill would formalize a Consumer Price Index for the Elderly that calculates the Consumer

Price Index, the cost-of-living adjustment, not the way it does now—a 40-year-old in the workplace—it calculates it based on a 70-year-old who is retired. A 40-year-old in the workplace has a very different set of expenses for their standard of living than does a 70-year-old. Obviously, the 40-year-old spends less on health care, on the average, than the 70-year-old, on the average, spends on health care. So we should calculate the cost-of-living adjustment that way.

That is not what so many people in this body want to do. There is just something about a bunch of Members of Congress, who have good salaries, who have good taxpayer-financed health care, making decisions to cut Social Security and cut Medicare.

I will close with this because I know Senator SHAHEEN is scheduled to speak and I will not take much longer.

But I hear these self-appointed budget hawks, most of whom will not be relying—almost none of whom, colleagues here, will be relying—on Social Security to make ends meet in their retirement. I take a back seat to nobody in what we do about budget cuts because I have been involved with a lot of colleagues on both sides of the aisle on how we deal with budget deficits. But when you hear these self-appointed fiscal hawks, these so-called wise men—and they are mostly men—talking about how we need to reform entitlements, scratch a little deeper. Ask them what they mean by that. They will probably say: Well, we can't sustain this. Ask them: Well, what do you mean by that? Then they will probably say: Well, we need structural reform. Ask them: Well, what do you mean by that? Ask them the question—what do they really mean? What is their idea? Their idea, almost always, is either raise the retirement age or cut benefits in some ways, cut the cost-of-living adjustment, something like that.

I will close with this. As to that townhall I was attending in Youngstown, I was there 3 years ago at a townhall, and a woman stood up and said: I have two jobs, both \$9 or \$10 an hour jobs. I have worked all my life this hard. She said: Do you know what. I am 63 years old. I just have to find a way to stay alive until I am 65—just for another year and a half—so I can have health insurance.

Imagine. This is a woman living right on the edge. She will not have much from Social Security. She has no savings. She just wanted to stay alive until she got health insurance.

That is why it matters so much what we do on social insurance, why it matters that we protect Medicare—really protect Medicare, not protect it by privatizing it. And it really matters why we protect Social Security and not “strengthen” the program by cutting the benefits. That is why our work matters. That is why it is so important we pass the Harkin-Begich-Hirono-Schatz-Brown bill.

Mr. President, I yield the floor to the Senator from New Hampshire.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business be until 7 p.m. for debate only.

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

ENDA

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, almost 50 years ago Congress passed the Civil Rights Act. This landmark legislation prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, and gender in employment, housing, and public accommodations. Many of us in the Senate remember the passage of that legislation. And many of us, unfortunately, saw firsthand the painful examples of legally sanctioned discrimination that existed before the Civil Rights Act.

I grew up in a State where I went to segregated schools. I can remember the separate drinking fountains and going to the movie theater where if you were an African American you had to sit in the balcony. These practices were wrong, and they ended because of the Civil Rights Act.

Well, this week the Senate has the opportunity to extend our national quest for equal opportunity for all by passing the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. This legislation simply prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and I give great credit to JEFF MERKLEY for sponsoring this legislation and for pushing for it.

I was proud as Governor of New Hampshire 16 years ago to sign legislation making New Hampshire only the 10th State in the country to include sexual orientation in its antidiscrimination laws. That State legislation went further than the bill before the Senate this week. It not only covered employment, but it covered housing and public accommodations as well. At the time, both the New Hampshire Senate and House were controlled by Republicans. Yet the bill passed both bodies with large bipartisan majorities because it was not seen then as a partisan issue.

Including sexual orientation in New Hampshire's antidiscrimination laws was just one more step forward in New Hampshire's long history of promoting civil rights. No one in America should be hired or fired because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

I realize, as we all do, that no law can erase prejudice. Prejudice will continue to exist after the Employment Non-Discrimination Act becomes law. But that is not the issue. The issue is whether it is acceptable as a matter of law in the United States to hire or fire