Mr. DURBIN. If I might ask another question to the Senator from Rhode Island from the time allotted on our side, I listened carefully to the speech given by the Republican leader this morning. I see my colleague from New York rises to yield her time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. I thank my friends from Illinois and Rhode Island.

How much time is remaining on our side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 1 minute 30 seconds.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I see what is going on here. Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle know the power of this issue but don’t really want to vote for it, and so they are putting impossible logjams in the path.

Would they believe that on this side of the aisle we would delay an important part of the ACA which would hurt—as my colleagues from Illinois and Rhode Island brought out—parents who have kids with cancer? We are not going to do that, and we are not going to do it on the fly.

So what I would say to my colleagues is if you believe in unemployment benefits and extending them, pass them clean and simple. Don’t play games. Don’t put obstacles in their path that you know would be insurmountable. Get it done.

I make one other point. The bottom line is very simple: People want to work. People who have lost their jobs after working decades for a company are knocking on doors every day. They are going online. They are desperate to work.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator’s time has expired.

Mr. SCHUMER. This idea that unemployment benefits encourage them not to work is balderdash.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. I yield back all time on the Republican side.

CLOTURE MOTION
The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative 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, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum has been waived.

The question is, is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 1845, a bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Alaska (Mr. BINGE) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) would have voted “nay.”

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 60, nays 37, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 2 Leg.]

YEAS—60

Begich Hatch Thune

BYRNE—37

Baldwin Harkin Murray

Bennet Heitkamp Pryor

Baucus Heller Reeds

Belmont Hickox Reed

Biden Johnson (SD) Reid

Brown Kaine Rockafeller

Cantwell King Sanders

Cardin Klobuchar Schatz

Carper Landrieu Schumer

Casey Leahy Shaheen

Coons Manchin Stabenow

Collins Menendez Tester

Cochrane Miller Udall (CO)

Collins Menedez Udall (NM)

Coons Warner Warren

Feinstein Merkley Whitehouse

Franken Mikulski Wyden

NOT VOTING—3

Baucus Hatch Thune

Mrs. BOXER. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It is not an order to reconsider; it is a separate cloture motion.

Mr. REID. I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 60, nays 37, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 2 Leg.]

YEAS—60

Ayotte Hagan Murphy

Baldwin Harkin Murray

Bennet Heitkamp Pryor

Baucus Heller Reeds

Belmont Hickox Reed

Biden Johnson (SD) Reid

Brown Kaine Rockafeller

Cantwell King Sanders

Cardin Klobuchar Schatz

Carper Landrieu Schumer

Casey Leahy Shaheen

Coons Manchin Stabenow

Collins Menendez Tester

Cochrane Miller Udall (CO)

Collins Menedez Udall (NM)

Coons Warner Warren

Feinstein Merkley Whitehouse

Franken Mikulski Wyden

NAYS—37

Alexander Fischer Moran

Barrasso Flake Paul

Bingaman Graham Risch

Baucus Grassley Roberts

Bennet Hoovers Rubio

Baucus Inhofe Scott

Baucus Johanns Sessions

Baucus Johnson (WI) Shelby

Baucus Kirk Toomey

Baucus Lee Vitter

Baucus McCain Wicker

Baucus McConnell Wicker
The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am so pleased that six Republicans—six out of all the Republicans—joined with us—every Democrat present—to reach that magic 60. We were needed to proceed to consider the unemployment compensation bill.

I think it is so important to recognize that Federal unemployment programs have been extended no less than 28 times under Republican Presidents and 13 times under Democratic Presidents. So this is nothing new—this is nothing new—and the fact that it has been made such a big deal is incomprehensible given the circumstances of us recovering from the greatest recession since the Great Depression, with a very special number, a very large number. The fact is we have a long-term unemployment rate that is very, way higher than normal.

The fact is, since we have extended Federal unemployment benefits so many times it should not be a problem, it is shocking it is a problem. In November 2008, unemployment insurance was extended with bipartisan support and no offset. So why is it when a Republican is President the Republicans say: OK, let’s help the unemployed without an offset, without bipartisan support? And when a Democrat is President, oh no, we could not do it?

Honestly, it just is so political on its face. Democrats have been consistent. Whether a Republican is President or a Democrat is President, we want to help those who have been unemployed. That is the difference between the parties. I say God bless those six Republicans who joined with us today so we can do our job and help the long-term unemployed.

The long-term unemployment rate is 2.6 percent—the long-term unemployment rate, twice as high as it was at any other time that these extended unemployment benefits were allowed to expire. Let me say that again, how urgent this is. The long-term unemployment rate—that means people who have been out of work for a long time, 6 months or more, is 2.6 percent, twice as high as it was at any other time in our history where we have extended unemployment benefits.

There are almost three unemployed people for every job opening nationwide. Let me repeat. There are almost three unemployed people for every job opening nationwide. We need to understand, while some of our Republican colleagues are blaming the unemployed and saying it is a disservice to give them unemployment compensation, that these folks are actively looking for jobs. That is part of the deal.

First of all, this is insurance. Second of all, they are looking for work. Third of all, they are stuck in the situation where it is not their fault. A Christmas present was given by the Republicans to the 1.3 million unemployed. That Christmas present was: Sorry, you are not getting your unemployment benefits. We left them without being able to deal with it.

But today we have a chance, a chance to do the right thing. In California, my State alone, there are 222,000 people who have lost their extended unemployment benefits. An additional 1.9 million people are projected to lose their benefits over the next 6 months if unemployment insurance is not extended.

What are these grandiose amounts of money that people get when they are long-term unemployed: $300 a week, on average—$300 a week, on average. So for our colleagues to say that people who are unemployed and desperate to collect $300 a week, could I tell you, try living on $300 a week. If you are lucky, you can keep a roof over your head but you have to be pretty lucky. If you are lucky, you can get maybe a little bit of nutrition. That $300 a week is a life-line. They can put some groceries on the table, pay their rent, and cover the expenses they have in looking for a job.

This keeps American families afloat at a critical time. I want to give you a few stories from my home State of the real face of long-term unemployment and why we have to vote to extend these benefits.

One woman wrote: I am 58 years old and am receiving unemployment benefits for the first time in my life. I am currently receiving my first federal extension. I was laid off because the non-profit I was working for lost a major portion of its state funding.

Getting unemployment benefits is not preventing me from looking for work. In fact, people getting extended unemployment benefits are required to prove they’re looking for work. I spend hours every week filling out applications and posting my resume without result.

Tell me, how am I, and thousands like me supposed to pay my rent and eat? I agree that Washington should “focus on job creation” but that should be in addition to, not instead of, extending benefits. I beg you.—

She writes to me: Please extend unemployment benefits. Thank you.

Another Californian wrote from Los Angeles:

After working 27 years for one employer, the bad economy finally led to my layoff and I had no time ever on one extension of the Federal extension. I was also laid off during my first federal extension.

Remember, this person worked 27 years for one employer.

I was told that because of the bad economy, I would get up to 63 weeks with the Federal Extension. Now I’m being told with further action needed the President, my benefits end at the end of the year even though that leaves me 3 months short.

Remember, this person worked 27 years for one employer.

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After paying into the system for 32 years, the employment office is asking for anything back and this is how I’m treated.

There are other stories. Kaitlyn of Twenty-nine Palms, 24 years old, lost her 40-week benefits when the Federal extension expired. She is a Marine Corps veteran, the mother of two young kids. She has been searching for work. The family cannot move because her husband, a veteran of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars must remain near the combat center until he is discharged from the Marines.

The loss of her benefits will cut deeply into the couple’s income. Smith said, “The family is already skimping on basics, including heat.”

Including heat.

“I have to keep the house at 55 degrees even though I have two little girls, ages 2½ and 1½.”

Bill Clinton was President and the Democrats passed a budget that balanced and set in motion a surplus, which was destroyed when George W. Bush was President. Let’s be clear on the history. There are facts. There are stubborn things. They are real. These are the exc—this is it. This is it. We need to consider the unemployment compensation bill.

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Including heat.

“I have to keep the house at 55 degrees even though I have two little girls, ages 2½ and 1½.”
Keeping the house at 55 degrees. That is a story which appeared in the Los Angeles Times on New Year’s Eve. Laura Walker, a 63-year-old paralegal has been looking for work since January when she was laid off from a California public accounting firm. She had been working in her benefits that have now run out.

Not all of us have savings and a lot of us have to take care of family because of what happened in the economy, said Walker, of Santa Barbara. She said she has shared a room for at least three weeks a week and shares an apartment with her unemployed son, his wife and two children. It’s going to put my family and me out on the streets.

That appeared in Bloomberg News on December 31.

We have a story of a software engineer who lives in San Diego County. She is one of 18,000 San Diego County residents to lose their payments. She said her $450 weekly unemployment payment went to buy her a job and the insurance, and other living necessities. She has tried zealously to find work. She has volunteered. She has attended meetings. She has cold called. She has written letters. She has joined the Project Match at the San Diego State University of San Diego. She said:

I haven’t been sitting here watching soap operas. I would go to work tomorrow, or today. I really am tired of this.

That story appeared in the San Diego Tribune. We ask unanimous consent that several additional stories be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Cindy Snow, of Beaumont, CA, lost her job by a chance encounter with the Republican Party. They just gave her $500 weekly unemployment payment, which did not make sense. I was an economics major a long time ago. So I am not saying that I am up to date on the latest theories. But one thing we know makes sense: When you cut something on the other hand and lose those jobs over there. It does not make sense, because when you cut something on the other hand, it has been hard to do. But who would have thought we could have done it. We did it.

So do not have to say now that, while we give an unemployment extension on the one hand, we are going to cut something on the other hand and lose those jobs over there. It does not make sense.

We care about jobs in this country. We can do this. We are not afraid to do it. I will correct the RECORD. I have not fact-checked it, so we have to fact check this. But this is what the documentary said: Approximately 400 or 500 families are worth more than 150 million dollars. That is what they said. We are going to fact-check this after. If I am wrong, I will correct the RECORD.

That is what the movie said: 450, 500 families have more net worth than half the population of America.

That is the income inequality.

So would I pay for this by putting a little tax on the billionaires? I just don’t know. I don’t wish to start cutting programs: education, housing, health care, whatever they come up with, which then means people would be laid off.

We can do this. We are not afraid to cut spending. We are not afraid to reduce the deficit. We did it under Bill Clinton. We got a surplus, and we are doing it under Barack Obama.

I defy any Republican to show me that you and I put a tax on the billionaires? Oh, yes, I would. But I don’t wish to start cutting programs: education, housing, health care, whatever they come up with, which then means people would be laid off.

Mrs. BOXER. So here you have the facts. I will just recap them. We have a situation where the long-term unem-

ployment rate—those looking for work and out of work for more than 6 months is higher than it has ever been, 2.6 percent.

We have a situation where we are coming out of the worst recession since the Great Depression though President Obama has done an amazing job on job creation, creating 8 million private sector jobs in his time—8 million private sector jobs under President Obama. We lost more than 600 million dollars in private savings over 8 years under George W. Bush. But we still have a problem. How many private sector jobs were lost in the recession? More than 8 million. So we need to re-

store those jobs.

So this is not the time—when you go for a job and there are three applicants for one job—to tell people they are cut off from unemployment.

Here is the issue. In a State that has a really high unemployment rate, less than about 5 percent, the full extension does not go forward. It only goes forward to States that have a high unemployment rate.

So it is targeted. It is not going to be昆明, China. It is going on States that have a really strong economy. It goes to States that have a tough unemployment rate, and have all these people coming for one job opening.

In some States it is filled to one. Re-

member, the average is almost three to one, three people for every job. In some States they are doing better. Maybe there is just two people for every job. But there are three nationally. In some States it is very low, so we just saying at this particular point in time: Let’s extend this for a 3-month period. Do it without offsets, because when you offset you cut something else and you constrict the economy at a time when we need it the most.

So we have never paid for unemployment extensions. Under George W. Bush, who started the current program, we never did—until the Bush record, which was taking surplus and paying for unemployment. That is what they said. We are going to fact-check this afternoon. If I am wrong, I will correct the RECORD.

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We can do this. We are not afraid to cut spending. We are not afraid to reduce the deficit. We did it under Bill Clinton. We got a surplus, and we are doing it under Barack Obama.

I defy any Republican to show me how this shapes up in a bad way with the Bush record, which was taking surplus, turning it into massive deficits and liter-

ally no job creation. It was 1.1 million jobs created, compared to cutting

January 7, 2014

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE
the deficit in half after President Barack Obama inherited the worst re-
cession since the Great Depression, cre-
ating 8 million new jobs in the private sec-
tor alone and reducing the deficit by half.

We know what we are doing, despite what they say, and it is OK, because at the end of the day the facts are the facts. I didn’t make up this chart. This is a chart that comes from the Congres-
sional Budget Office. These are their num-
bers.

The stories I have told and that I have put in the RECORD are poignantly.
There are people out there who are at their wit’s end holding their lives to-
gether, keeping their homes at 55 de-
grees when they have little children in them, not knowing if they can pay the rent, not knowing if they can go to the grocery store, not knowing if they will be homeless, not knowing what the future holds.

The least we can do, the least we can do in this Chamber is stand and fight for them.

What are we here for anyway? Are we here for the Koch brothers? I think not. The biggest surprise is how just fine this country is. It is a great country because everyone can dream to go to the top. But if we lose the middle class and we are not there with that safety net when they fall, we will lose everything and this country will not resemble the America I grew up in and that I knew. I had nothing and my husband had nothing. He lost his father when he was only a young boy. He played soccer, was a school crossing guard and raised three boys.

In this country, my husband went to college, to law school, and started his own law firm, his own small business. That is what America is.

But when we were in trouble when we were young, we knew we had the hope and the dream. It was real. It wasn’t unreachable. It was reachable because there was a safety net, and part of that safety net is unemployment insurance. Part of the safety net is extending it for the long-term unemployed.

I am going to close with a couple of facts about health care because I am so tired of the “bad news bears” coming out here every day whining about ObamaCare. I wish to tell everyone some of the good news about health care because we don’t hear it enough.

Across this country, over 2.1 million Americans have enrolled through the exchange in private health insurance—2.1. It is pretty amazing, and I wish to state some more facts.

In California, I wish to tell you what is happening. We have our own ex-
change, Covered California, coveredCA.com. What has happened so far we don’t hear around the beltway. All we hear is: ObamaCare is bad. ObamaCare is bad.

I wish to tell some stories of what is truly happening and these facts will catch up with us. Such as 400,000 Cali-
ifornians now have coverage through the California exchange, private cov-

We have more than 200,000 Californi-
ans on Medi-Cal, which is Califor-
nia’s Medicaid Program. A truly great number is more than 1 million California families—not people, families, so we are talking about probably a few million people—have begun the process of applying for coverage.

Across the country, I can state—and we know we have had our bumps in the road—today we are resolving some of those bumps. We had about 2 percent of the people who wound up in a problem where they couldn’t get the insurance they wanted. President Obama fixed that problem.

Now we have that 2-percent problem down to way less than 2 percent, very few families. Let’s get that clear. Will

there be more bumps? Yes. Will we fix them, yes. Are we still worried about the few thousand families who need our help? Yes. We will fix it.

I don’t shy away from this. If we have a problem, we fix it. Somebody point out to me any business that doesn’t have a few problems in the rollout, and I will say that is pretty amazing.

We had more than 3 million in the rollout. It was bad. We are fixing it, and the proof is in the pudding. Today, 9 million Americans have new secure health in-

surance; 2.1 million, on that other chart, have received it through all the different exchanges. 2.1 million; 3.9 million have enrolled in Medicaid; and 3 million young adults can now stay on their parents’ plans. There were bumps in the road, we fixed them, and we will continue to do so, but this is a good story.

I wish to read from some constitu-
ents who have written to me about the Affordable Care Act. These are real people speaking, not politicians, not I—one.

Mary Natwick of Monrovia signed up for a platinum plan for her family of three through the Covered California Web site. Even though she makes too much to qualify for a subsidy and even though she purchased the highest level plan, she is saving $1,000 a month on her premiums and she has a lower de-

ductible.

Mary wrote:

Needless to say, we are thrilled beyond be-

lief. Please accept our gratitude, and pass on

our thanks to all who voted for this bill.

This is a constituent who likes ObamaCare and she thanks the Senator from Oregon, Mr. MERKLEY.

David Specter of Ventura and his wife, both 62 and 58. Their old premiums cost $882 a month. Now because David and his wife qualify for subsidized premiums on the Covered California exchange, they will pay a total of $434 a month with lower deductibles. That is $460 a month in savings, California savings, that means in 1 year, $400 a month. They can spend it in the neighborhood, in the movies, at a restaurant, in the grocery store, on a vacation, gifts for their grandkids.

David wrote:

Thank you so much for supporting the Af-

fordable Care Act. It may not be perfect, but it

sure makes a big difference for us.

I think that sums it up for me. The Affordable Care Act. ObamaCare, may not be perfect, but it sure is making a difference for Americans—so far 9 mil-

lion strong, and it will be way more than that.

Maya Walls of San Diego was diag-
nosed with breast cancer at 27 years of age. Since that diagnosis 20 years ago, she has either kept working to main-
tain insurance or paid very high COBRA premiums in between her jobs to keep her coverage and to avoid pre-
existing condition exclusions. That is be-
cause, as we know, until ObamaCare became the law of the land, insurers could walk out on people once they got sick.

Two years ago, Maya lost her job. In September she held her breath and went without coverage. On October 1, she found out she finally qualified for California’s new expanded Medicaid Program, which she had never qualified for before.

She wrote:

Please do not give an inch on the ACA.
This is the first time I have taken a deep breath in 20 years. Thank you.

I see we have a new Presiding Officer, and I wish to retell this story. This is a story of one of my constitu-
ents who was diagnosed with breast cancer at 27 years of age. Since that di-
agnosis she was so scared she would lose her insurance because of her pre-
existing condition that she kept paying very high COBRA premiums. When she finally ran out of options, she lost her insurance and just found out she quali-

fies for the new expanded Medicaid.

She wrote:

Please do not give an inch on the ACA.
This is the first time I have taken a deep breath in 20 years.

I say to the American people—I hope a few will hear my voice—nothing in life is perfect. No bill is perfect. No business is perfect. No one is perfect; no individual, no President, no Senator, not we, or the people in our offices, and we do our best to step up to the plate.

If things go wrong, as it did with the rollout, we get mad about it, but we fix it, and we don’t go back to the prob-

lems we had before of kids being kicked off their parents’ insurance and having no insurance, of people being told: Sorry. You have asthma or you have cancer or you have high blood pressure. We can’t help you.

Those days are over. Being a woman was a preexisting condition. Having been a victim of sexual assault was a preexisting condition. If someone was in an abusive relationship, they said: You are just too high of a risk, and they walked away.

They were lifetime caps on our poli-
cies. There were annual caps on our policies, gender discrimination, pre-
existing condition discrimination, all of that.

I am going to say anyone who wants to repeals ObamaCare or the Affordable Care Act will go back to those days.

I will never forget reading a New American Foundation study that said,
if we hadn’t changed health care in this country, we were getting to a place where premiums would have risen to about 50 percent of our incomes, on average, for at least half of American households. At that point, who is going to be insured?

I met people who were praying on their hands and knees to turn 65. As we get older we say: Oh, my God. I want to stay young.

People were saying: Let me get to my 65th birthday so I can get Medicare because I have no insurance.

That is what I heard from my constituents.

What I hear may not be perfect, but it is saving their lives: Fix what is a problem, Senator. You can.

I thank the President for acting to make sure the people who got those cancellation notices—it was about 2 percent of all Americans—were able to stay on similar insurance for an extended period of time.

Yes, we will fix what the problems are, but we will also rejoice when we get letters such as I am getting from all over my State. I ask unanimous consent to be able to provide additional stories that I think are important in this time of income inequality—and make the point that we make sure we extend the unemployment compensation to the long-term unemployed as they, through no fault of their own, are trying to keep their house and home together, which is so critical.

I thank my six Republican colleagues who showed courage, stepped up, and allowed us to get on this bill. I hope we pass it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I wish to make a few very brief comments, and the first is this: In the budget agreement that was hammered out right before we left for the holidays, a provision was inserted by Congressman RYAN that changed the COLA details for our veterans. This provision is outrageous. It is changing the retirement deal in the middle of a person’s service or, for many of our veterans, even as they have retired—but the time they have retired and the time they reach age 62. In the coming days of this week, I hope this body can come together and reverse this provision which unfairly changes the terms of retirement that our veterans stood up for as a nation when they were overseas, and we must stand up for them here at home.

Secondly, I would like to express hope for the bipartisan spirit that led to an agreement to debate the bill regarding restoring emergency unemployment. I had eight townhalls over the weekend, and I can tell you that it strikes people as fundamentally unfair that States with high unemployment, such as my home State of Oregon—that these weeks of emergency unemployment, which was a deal hammered out in a bipartisan fashion under a Republican President, President Bush, should be set asunder.

Indeed, on December 28, 18,000 Oregon families got a lump of coal in their stockings, and in the course of this coming year another 58,000 Oregon families will be thrown out in the cold, if you will, due to the failure to reauthorize this program. Indeed, the failure to reauthorize it not only affects directly those families who need a longer bridge to the next job because of the high unemployment levels, but it also affects the economy, destroying an estimated 4,000 jobs. Our citizens want to see us create jobs, not lose them.

So I hope the bipartisan spirit that led to our agreeing to debate restoring the emergency unemployment program will lead to our actually reauthorizing the emergency unemployment program.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, this year represents an opportunity for us to refocus and plan for our year ahead. Unfortunately, for millions of Americans their focus will be on trying to stay afloat over the next year while they search for work. All of us here know there is no more important issue for middle-class families across America right now than jobs and the economy. This is what they want their elected officials to be focused on, and it is exactly what I think we ought to be working on every day.

By reaching a bipartisan agreement last month, we did a number of things to work toward that goal. First of all and importantly, we showed the American people that American of Congress can work together, that we can listen to each other, and that we can get into a room and talk frankly without trying to hurt each other politically. Second, by breaking through that partisanship, we finally ended that seemingly never-ending cycle of叽叽催促 crisis to crisis. Third, we showed that “compromise” isn’t a dirty word and that there is a big coalition that is ready to make some sacrifices politically to get things done. Finally and importantly, the efforts to continue our economy, we gave American families and businesses the certainty they need to grow.

Of course, there is much more to do. As much as we are heartened by the hope that has been let into our economy this year, we understand just how fragile our recovery still is, with millions of Americans still out of work.

Now is the time to double our efforts, not shrink from the challenges we face because that is what our economy means nothing if we don’t continue to support policies that help middle class. That work absolutely starts with extending unemployment benefits for the millions of Americans who have been losing their benefits since December 28.

Because unemployment assistance goes right back into the economies of communities large and small, non-partisan economists have said that failure to continue these benefits will cost us over 200,000 jobs. And renewing these benefits is simply the right thing to do at a time when millions of American families continue to teeter on the brink in States where unemployment remains stubbornly high.

I have come to the Senate floor today with the hope that we can continue with the bipartisan momentum we saw with today’s cloture vote and that we have seen over the last few weeks and take a final vote to provide a lifeline for millions of Americans. This should be an easy issue. It would be simply wrong to cut off the support while our economy continues to struggle and so many workers are really having difficulty finding work. Right now, in fact, there are three unemployed workers for every single job opening. If very opening it is filled tomorrow, we would still have more than 7 million American workers across the country without a job to even apply for. More
than one-third of all unemployed workers have been out of a job for 6 months or longer—above historic averages and higher than in past recoveries.

Millions of Americans are unemployed today not because they do not want to work, but because they do not have valuable skills, but simply because they found themselves in an economy that isn’t creating jobs as quickly as needed. These unemployed workers are desperate to get back on the job, and unemployment benefits make all the difference for them and their families while they scour the want ads, pound the pavement, and send out resume after resume.

I have received story after story from workers and families across my home State of Washington about what unemployment benefits have meant to them and what losing them would mean for their future. These men and women can’t afford to have the rug pulled out from under them and are now struggling with that.

One of these stories came from a woman named Carol from Puyallup in my home State. She is a nurse. She was laid off from her job. She decided that in order to make ends meet she would open a legal nurse consulting business, so she enrolled in classes to help her hone her entrepreneurial skills. While taking those classes, Carol relied on her unemployment benefits to get by. Then, not only were her benefits slashed significantly due to sequestration, but Carol just found out she was one of the 25,000 people in Washington State whose benefits were completely cut off on December 28.

As a leader in the classroom, Carol has spoken to many other soon-to-be business owners who are suffering. In the face of unexpected job loss, they now feel as if they are being punished for deciding to chart a new course in their lives. They are creating work for themselves and potentially others but now have to decide whether they can continue following that dream without the critical support unemployment benefits provide them.

Carol is not alone. I heard from a woman who was laid off from her job at a plant in Keyport, WA, early last year. She told me:

> As a leader in the classroom, Carol has spoken to many other soon-to-be business owners who are suffering. In the face of unexpected job loss, they now feel as if they are being punished for deciding to chart a new course in their lives. They are creating work for themselves and potentially others but now have to decide whether they can continue following that dream without the critical support unemployment benefits provide them.

For Traci, unemployment benefits are not the solution. A job is what she wants. But they provide her with some critical support while she takes care of her family and tries to find that work. These are the stories I have heard, but there are a lot like them. Millions of people across America, including an almost additional 28,000 in my State, stand to lose the benefits they need if Congress doesn’t act soon. These workers are not looking for a handout. They do not want to be a burden. But they need support while they work to get back on their feet and back on the job.

In this struggling economy, renewing these benefits is truly crucial. The bipartisan Congressional Budget Office has said that renewing unemployment benefits is one of the most effective policy tools we have to boost the economy and get the pocketbook consumers. So I am really hopeful the Senate will act quickly, without political games, because failure to do so wouldn’t just be devastating for the families who count on it, it would also hurt many small businesses and communities to have the billions of dollars pulled away from consumers who spend it every month on food and rent and clothing.

Last month’s budget deal provided us with a glimmer of bipartisan hope coming into this new year. However, we have to continue working together to focus on improving the economy for middle-class Americans. We cannot afford to allow this lifeline to be cut off.

The stories I shared today, like so many others, are heartbreaking, but they also show the fierce determination exhibited by so many who are out of work in the struggle to get back on their feet. These are the stories of people who are applying for work far below their own qualifications, going back to school to earn the skills needed to change careers or waking up every day to scour for jobs in their communities that will allow them to keep their heads above water.

I believe it is Congress that needs to match their determination and grit. We took an important first step today, and I know unemployed workers I have heard from are watching. Today’s vote is a glimmer of hope for them. We can’t let it fade. We need to move on and pass this extension quickly, and the House needs to follow suit.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and 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. LEAHY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, what is the parliamentary situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in post cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 1845.

FARM BILL CONFERENCE

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I congratulate Senator REID, who I know worked extraordinarily hard to get the votes for this.

I read something someone wrote in the press, saying they are afraid that Senator REID didn’t talk about these issues enough, and I think this is wrong. I would point out that you can either talk or do. I thought he spoke quite well, but he basically spent the time lining up the votes and won. A lot of people talk about what they want to do. Senator REID usually gets it accomplished. As one who serves here longer than anybody else in this body, I would rather see people get things done, and he did.

Speaking of things to get done in this new year, the farm bill remains as one of the Nation’s top legislative priorities. Yet it has languished in Congress’s in-box. As the Senate begins this new session, it is a relief—at last—to be able to say that there are new glimmers of hope that Congress is nearing the point of being able to complete work on a farm bill.

We passed this farm bill twice in the Senate. I compliment the chair of the Agriculture Committee, Senator STabenow. She brought together Democratic and Republican lawmakers to work hard to craft a farm bill that serves at one time or another as either chair or ranking member or both on that committee, and said: Why don’t we just do it the old-fashioned way? Instead of just talking about it, why don’t we actually sit down, write it, and bring something to the floor that can pass? We did it, and it passed twice. While over in the House, the bill languished for quite some time before they decided to move forward.

Senator Stabenow and Chairman Lucas from the House worked throughout the holiday break. My own staff, Adrienne Wojciechowski and Rebekah Weber, have worked very hard with them to produce a bipartisan, comprehensive bill that addresses the needs of farmers, families, communities, and taxpayers.

A farm bill is a dynamic element of our agriculture economy, and of our overall national economy. A farm bill touches every family, in ways large and small. It has now been more than 460 days since the last farm bill expired. That is well over a year ago. Since then, American farmers have
struggled to make long-term planting decisions, and more than 20 programs—such as those affecting organic certification cost-sharing, beginning farmers, relief from livestock disasters, renewable energy, and rural small businesses and a major part of my State and the Presiding Officer’s State. But every State has some rural area that is extremely important.

The farm bill limbo is part of a string of artificial made-by-Congress dilemmas. Farm bill limbo hurts not only farmers, but their communities, and our economy. It hampers efforts to help those who are struggling the most in our communities, with food security for their families. It holds us back from making greater gains toward energy security.

Last month, the Republican leadership in the House of Representatives proposed a short farm bill extension. Short extensions are nothing new. I remember when I was on Capitol Hill. Most of us know them by the term “kicking the can down the road.” They patch things over from one crisis to the next. But just as a temporary extension to fund government offers only short-term not upward rural change, a short extension of the farm bill would not provide farmers the certainty they need to plan, or funding for 5-year programs. Farming is a business, and saddling farmers with this needlessly makes their difficult work even more difficult.

Even worse, the proposed House extension would prolong direct payment subsidies for another year. Senselessly costly taxpayers untold millions of dollars. At this point, the only acceptable path forward is to deliver a full, five-year, comprehensive farm bill by the end of January. Moving forward on the farm bill not only will avoid the so-called “dairy cliff,” but it also will help families put food on the table, improve conservation efforts, support small farming, and put an end to wasteful expenditures. This farm bill marks the seventh time that I have served as a member of a Farm Bill Conference Committee. I know how difficult it is to bring complex, five-year bills to the floor and ultimately to final passage after a conference. I don’t in any way diminish the difficulty in that. I know; I have been there, and I have done that. When there have been many significant changes in agricultural policy since the 1981 farm bill, which I had the privilege to write, one thing has remained the same: No farm bill is easy, and no farm bill is perfect. But to finalize a farm bill, the Senate and House must work together to reach bipartisan agreement. It means, whether you are a Republican or Democrat, forget the symbolism and start dealing with the substance. Stop rhetoric and go to reality.

The conference committee is making steady progress, and Chairwoman Stabenow and Chairman Lucas deserve credit, and our appreciation, for working closely together to bridge the wide differences between our two bills. The cuts it includes will not go unnoticed, as we have already seen spending reductions from the sequester, followed by short-term nutrition assistance benefits. We can talk here on the floor. We are all going to collect our paycheck every month. But we sometimes forget these cuts and policy changes affect real people in real ways. So we have to continue to do the best we can.

Speaking as a Vermonter, I would note that every farm bill is important to Vermont, just as every farm bill is important to every State represented in this body. Farm bills make real differences in our quality of life, and the fact that Congress every 5 years or so would renew and pass a farm bill was once something Americans could take for granted. This is the first time we have not been able to do so.

The delays have been unfortunate, and they have been needless. But I am increasingly hopeful that this recent change to dark defeat for a close. Farmers and families around the Nation are looking to us to pass forward-looking, fiscally responsible, and regionally sensitive food and farm policy—and the two have to be together, both the food and the farm policy. Farmers have to be able to plan, but families have to know, when their children go to school, they are going to be fed. Every teacher will tell you that a hungry child cannot learn. If children aren’t learning, what are we doing for the next generation? That is our responsibility.

Now is the time, without further delay, to enact a farm bill that will strengthen the Nation and support the economy. I know we are up to this challenge. We have done it twice already in this body, forging a bipartisan coalition. I am hoping the other body, which has not consistently, works with the Republicans who tried to block it, will come forward and speak, not just for a small part of one political party, but for all Americans.

Before I yield, I ask unanimous consent that all the time during the recess count postcloture on the motion to proceed to S. 1845. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEAHY. I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:32 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. Baldwin).

EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION EXTENSION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, last month the President of the United States gave a speech on what has come to be known by the code words “income inequality,” which means different things to different people. He focused about 90% of his talk on the subject of that, and that is upward income mobility. In other words, we want to make sure that somebody who goes to work in a restaurant bussing tables can work their way up the income and education ladder to where they can actually own their own restaurant and create jobs and opportunities for other people. The President called it “the defining challenge of our time.”

Well, the timing, coming as it has, one might be forgiven from wondering whether the President and his allies want to change the subject from ObamaCare. We know that the rollout of ObamaCare has been an unmitigated disaster, and, frankly, there is more to come. We can certainly understand the President’s desire not to change the subject. But while he is changing the subject, Republicans should embrace the challenge of discussing this: What are the policies that have resulted in income inequality and income immobility when it comes to jobs in America?

Of course, the President, you might predict, has talked about his proposed solutions, which are creating more government programs and more spending, adding up to $6 billion a week that we have to borrow from China and our other creditors just to extend the unemployment insurance program by 3 months. My question is: What happens after that 3 months? I don’t want to be rash, but I will make a prediction that the Democrats will say: We need another 3 months. After that, they will say: We need another 3 months. Before you know it, unemployment insurance has been extended beyond the half-year mark which is the basic program, to another full year beyond that at a cost of $25 billion.

Just to put all of this in context, the Federal Government spent $250 billion for extended unemployment insurance benefits since 2008. Of course, the President did not mention some of the primary causes for income inequality and the loss of upward mobility because he is responsible for a lot of that, along with his allies. He failed to mention that under his administration, America has suffered the longest period of high unemployment since the Great Depression, and he failed to mention his signature health care law. I mentioned that a moment ago. He is trying to pivot to another subject, but inevitably we find ourselves coming back to ObamaCare and its negative impact on job creation and the 40-hour workweek.

We know that ObamaCare has done a number of things in the short period of time since it began the rollout, which will continue to 2014. Millions of people have lost their existing insurance coverage. In fact, more people have lost their insurance coverage than have