amendments they have been allowed to offer on this and other legislation. Everyone within the sound of my voice should understand that is hollow. It has become a common refrain for the minority to blame their own frequent obstruction on me. Two Republican Senators held up progress on virtually everything we tried to do under the first term of this Congress. They wouldn't let any other amendments come up unless they got a vote on their amendment.

The fact remains that if my Republican colleagues have complaints about my leadership style, they should also have complaints about Senator Frist, my predecessor. He is a fine man, a Republican leader. We still stay in touch, as I do with the other Republican leader, Senator Lott, whom I worked with very closely. I hear no complaints about their leadership style when they were leading the Senate. During my time as leader, Republicans have offered 7 out of 10 amendments on which the Senate has voted. Seventy percent of the amendments we have voted on in the Senate have been Republican amendments. This has been a greater share than either Senator Frist or Senator Lott offered. During my leadership in the 111th Congress, minority amendments represented a greater share of amendment votes than during any single Congress. Think about it.

So Republicans should stop trying to justify their opposition to helping Americans in need with false claims about what is going on in this institution. Let's start talking about facts rather than fiction—and there is a lot of fiction going around. Republicans should, I repeat, stop trying to justify their opposition to helping Americans in need with false claims about my leadership.

It is quite interesting to note that House Republican leaders—and I am sure they sent a copy of it to the Senate—have instructed colleagues in a written memo. It says: Show compassion for the unemployed.

I say to everyone that we don't need a memo for us to show compassion to the unemployed.

They also say: Treat them as individuals.

Oh yeah? That is not a bad idea, but it will be very difficult for Senate Republicans to seem sympathetic to the plight of the unemployed while still opposing a helping hand for 1.3 million job seekers. It shouldn't take a memo to realize that unemployed Americans—and particularly those who have been out of work for months—deserve our compassion. We don't need a memo for that, a memo saying: Show compassion. No wonder Republicans in Congress are out of touch with Republicans around the country. Republicans around the country support extending unemployment benefits because they have compassion for those Americans who are in trouble.

Being out of work is not only financially devastating, it is heartbreaking. I recently received a letter from a single mother of two who has lived in Nevada all of her life. She is afraid she will soon be homeless—a single mother. She wrote: ''I have no desire to live off the system.'' She is speaking for virtually everyone we are trying to help. This woman is the rule, not the exception.

To qualify for unemployment is not easy. Someone has to be laid off through no fault of their own, and they have to actively seek work.

These unemployed aren't gaming the system; there simply aren't enough jobs to go around. For every job there are three people trying to get that job. The longer a person is unemployed, the more difficult it becomes to find work. This is not being made up; this is a fact. The long-term unemployed are half as likely as their recently let-go competitors to be hired. But that doesn't stop them from trying. Rather than encouraging these people who are desperate for help to keep looking, cutting off unemployment benefits actually encourages the long-term unemployed to actually drop out of the job market altogether. That doesn't help them, our communities, our States, and our country. It hurts families, it hurts communities, and it certainly hurts the economy.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Yesterday the majority leader rejected my offer for both sides to offer amendments to the unemployment insurance bill—the way things used to work around here; we had a bill called up, and we had amendments. This is, sadly, typical of the way things are these days in this institution. If the majority leader just accepted my offer, we could actually be debating and amending this bill instead of wasting time. How does the majority leader expect to achieve consensus when one side doesn't have the chance to offer any input at all? That is the way the Senate used to operate.

Look. If the majority leader wants this bill to pass the Senate, then there is a very good likelihood he is going to have to find a way to pay for it. I will be offering one idea on that front; that is, paying for a longer extension by dropping the mandate that forces Americans to buy insurance they don't want. But if they don't like that idea, there are others. One is a bipartisan idea endorsed by the President that ensures individuals can't draw both Social Security disability benefits and unemployment benefits at the same time. Senators COBURN and PORTMAN both have versions of that. There is another plan offered by Senator AYOTTE that would cut down on fraud in refundable tax credits. There are plans for job creation that will be offered by Senators PAUL, THUNE, and INHOFE.

These plans take a different approach than the government-led one we see from our Democratic friends. They rely on unlocking the potential of the private sector to actually increase employment. Why don't we have a vote on them in the Senate? I am sure there are many Democratic ideas out there as well, but we won't get the chance to debate any of them as long as the majority leader keeps blocking us from offering amendments.

This obstructionism by the Democratic majority is against the traditions of this body, and it needs to end because if Democrats truly want to get anything done this year, they are going to have to learn how to work with us.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION EXTENSION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1845, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, it has been 11 days since Federal unemployment insurance expired for 1.3 million Americans, and every day more Americans lose their benefits as their 26 weeks of State benefits expire.

I hope my colleagues join Senator HELLER and me in our efforts to swiftly pass this 3-month extension. Many of my colleagues have talked about issues with respect to a longer term piece of legislation, the cost of it, should we pay for it, and are there changes necessary in the program to make it more effective and efficient. Those are thoughtful and worthy considerations, but they should not deprive 1.3 million Americans—and that number is growing each day—basic benefits. These are modest benefits—about $300 a week—that allow them to just keep their families together, keep trying to search for a job.

I would point out that the only way one qualifies for this benefit is, No. 1, if someone had a job and they lost it through no fault of their own, and they are constant in keeping up the search for work. That is one of the requirements. It is all about work. In this economy, it is all about the fact that there are two or three job seekers for every job. In some parts of the country—in Rhode Island, Massachusetts,

Nevada, Arizona, Tennessee, States that have high unemployment—it is not just three to one, in some cases it is more.

I mentioned on the floor just 2 days ago an article that appeared in the Washington Post that talked about a new dairy opening, or reopening, in Hagerstown, MD, with 36 jobs. They thought there would be a large demand for the jobs, but there were basically 1,600 applicants for 36 jobs. That is not unique to that town in Maryland. That is, unfortunately, something that is happening all across this country, and it reflects the need to extend these benefits immediately.

We have serious issues to work out, but we understand, or we should understand, that to do it carefully and thoughtfully requires time and requires the attention of the experts in the relevant committees. In fact, I can recall coming down here before these benefits expired asking unanimous consent to extend them for 1 year, and one of the responses, one of the objections from my colleagues on the Republican side was we have to do this through the committee. We have to do this thoughtfully and deliberately. We have an opportunity to help people who desperately need help and start that deliberative process, and I hope we do that.

Yesterday, we took an important step forward. We procedurally moved forward to start consideration of this legislation. I wish to thank again Senator HELLER and all of my colleagues who joined in that vote. That has given us a chance to finish the job, but it is going to be a very difficult job to finish.

I think what we can do immediately—and this might be a two-step process—is quickly pass the Reed-Heller legislation—90 days, unfunded. It will immediately put money into the economy. It will immediately help struggling Americans who are looking for work—they have to in order to qualify for these funds—and it will help overall the economy. As the CBO has projected, if we do not fund for the year unemployment insurance, we will lose 200,000 jobs; 200,000 jobs which would be generated by this program will be lost.

So we will have a double whammy. We will still have people unemployed searching for work without any assistance and some, in fact, will stop searching. They will give up. Then we will not have the creation of additional jobs because of this money going into the economy, generating further demand, and further demand generating a need to keep people on and hire some more.

I hope we can finish the job we started yesterday. It was a very important step forward and a very important step forward not only to help individual families, as I suggested, but to bolster economic demand throughout the economy and that is going to lead to growth.

I find it somewhat ironic when I hear some of my colleagues talking about, oh, we truly need to create jobs. That is what we have to do. Yes, we agree. But there have been so many proposals that have been presented both by the administration and by my colleagues that have not been given consideration—creating a national infrastructure bank which will fund, through a quasi-public mechanism, highway construction, bridge renovations, sewer lines, and those things—that have been languishing for months and months and months and months. So we should get on with those things, I agree. But the immediate crisis is helping these 1.3 million Americans, and that number is growing.

There is another reason why it is particularly critical to talk about the extended unemployment benefits that are the subject of our debate. We should not end this program now. As this chart indicates, long-term unemployment is much higher today than it has ever been when we terminated these benefits. In April of 1959, when they ended the extended benefits, it was .9 percent—long-term unemployment. In April 1962, .9 percent; .4 percent in March of 1973; .9 percent in 1977; 1.2 percent long-term unemployment in 1985; 1.3 percent in 1994; 1.3 percent in 2003; and today, 2.6 percent of long-term unemployment.

We are in a new situation. These could be structural market changes which are making it harder and harder for some people to find employment, even after searching desperately, and that is exactly who this program is designed to help. The State program, the initial 26 weeks, covers people who lose their job and then relatively quickly—relatively quickly—can find other employment. This program is the one that is designed for those people who, for many reasons, are having difficulty finding a job over many weeks and months. Today we are at twice the level we have ever been when we considered cutting off these benefits. Actually, we have cut off these benefits. It was December 28.

For that reason alone, this issue of extended benefits has to be addressed first, I would argue, on an emergency basis. Then let's think long and hard about longer term efforts to address the problem. Many of my colleagues have suggested issues with respect to job training, with respect to incentives for education, and all of them are worthy, but they can't be done in the context of dueling proposals on the floor. They have to be done thoughtfully. If we can quickly adopt the Reed-Heller bill, it will give these long-term unemployed—this record number of long-term unemployed who have been cut off from benefits—it will give them help and give us time.

We have heard from countless citizens all across the country, and they come from all walks of life and from every aspect of unemployment. The other day, Senator KLOBUCHAR released a report from the Joint Economic Committee which was extremely well done and which described in detail the recipients. There is no one age group. It spans the gamut. There is no one ethnic concentration. There are some geographic areas that are doing quite well, but there are areas that are doing quite badly that are scattered across the country. Rhode Island and Nevada are, unfortunately, leading the list of states with high unemployment. They are very dissimilar States, thousands of miles apart, different economies entirely, but they are caught up in this same problem of unemployment and particularly long-term unemployment.

The people who are unemployed are not sitting around passively. They are out looking every day. In Rhode Island I have met people who have worked for 30 years. They are in their fifties. They had good jobs. They were bookkeepers. They were white-collar professionals. They are trying to take care of an elderly parent, they have responsibilities to children, and they desperately want to work.

One constituent who wrote to my office has been out of work since December of 2012. He has applied to over 300 jobs. He has taken additional classes at our local community college in the hopes of becoming a more attractive candidate for employment. Yet he remains out of work.

Another constituent who has lost her benefits doesn't have enough money to pay her bills and they have to move in with a sister because she can't pay the rent.

That is what is happening. This is not some academic exercise, some rhetorical ideological debate. This is about helping real people who want to work and they can't find a job after desperately looking for one.

A third constituent wrote me the following letter:

> I never thought that I would be among the unemployed, but here I am after over 30 years of experience in my field in higher education administration. I used to make 60K a year and now my unemployment benefits run out in mid March. I have been searching for a job not only in my field, but also doing anything possible using my transferable skills. I have not received an invitation for any interviews at all. . . . So to those who say that extending benefits causes people to stay unemployed longer—they are wrong. When you lose your job, you would do anything to gain employment and regain your dignity. No one wants to subsist on unemployment compensation. Please keep up the fight for extended benefits. It has been a lifeline for me.

Thirty years of experience, retraining already undertaken, searching relentlessly for a job. An important point here, too, is it is about the economics, but it is also about an individual's dignity and their identity. I don't care who you are. A job helps define who you are. It gives one a sense of esteem and accomplishment, whether one is mopping floors or directing the operations of the hugest national corporation. For my colleagues to suggest somehow, well, yes, if someone is a CEO of a company, that is very valuable work and that gives them self-esteem, they miss the point. A job well

done, whether it is cleaning floors or merging companies, gives the kind of satisfaction and the kind of self-respect that is critical. So this is about money, yes, but it is also about giving people the opportunity as Americans to live out their full potential, to contribute to their family and to the economy.

There are 1.3 million Americans and more each day who are facing this same dilemma, and that is why Congress needs to create jobs today and help Americans compete for the jobs of tomorrow. It means taking a multifaceted approach with things such as restoring our manufacturing might by focusing on advanced technologies, ensuring local businesses have access to the capital they need to grow and expand, improving our schools and workforce training programs to ensure we have a highly educated and skilled workforce, and investing in our infrastructure. All of these things have to be done, but it is going to be very difficult to do them in the context of this legislation. That is why again I urge, let us move this bill forward. Let us help these people who are struggling and working very hard and then let us put ourselves on a very fast track to deal with these issues—manufacturing renaissance, job training.

We have not reauthorized the Workforce Investment Act since 1998. That is the basic sort of education program for those adults and for people looking to move into the workforce, and the world has changed a lot since 1998. That is the result of some indifference. I would ask why in 1998, with a Republican Congress, and in the last few years of the Clinton administration, from 2000 to 2006, a Republican President, a Republican Congress, we couldn't do those things. It is not a time to assess blame, but it is a time to point out the situation that if we want to get these issues done, let us start moving, but let us not leave these unemployed Americans behind indefinitely without hope.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. REED. I would be happy to.

Mr. DURBIN. I would like to ask a question of the Senator from Rhode Island through the Chair.

There has been a debate on the floor, and we have heard it off the floor, about whether we should pay for unemployment benefits. Historically, if I am not mistaken, most of the decisions to extend unemployment insurance benefits have been considered emergency measures and not paid for, and now there is a suggestion from many Republicans that we need to cut spending in areas to compensate for this extension of unemployment benefits which, if I am not mistaken, are in the range of $25 billion or $26 billion a year.

One of the suggestions yesterday from Republican Senate leader MITCH MCCONNELL would, not surprisingly, address the Affordable Care Act, so-called ObamaCare, and would eliminate one of the basic protections in that law. What Senator MCCONNELL proposed yesterday was to eliminate the responsibility of every individual to have health insurance, which was put in the law so we could have a large pool of insured people and say to anyone with a preexisting condition: You will not be disqualified for health insurance.

So the Senator from Kentucky has given us this approach which the Republicans support: If you will agree to eliminate protection from health insurance for people with preexisting conditions, then we will allow you to give unemployment benefits. In other words, if you will eliminate this protection in health insurance for 300 million-plus Americans, we will give you 1 year of unemployment benefits for 1.3 million Americans. I might add, for the record, there are 1.9 million individuals with preexisting conditions in the State of Kentucky—the State of the Senator who made this proposal.

I would ask the Senator from Rhode Island, who has shown extraordinary leadership on this issue of extended unemployment benefits: First, would he address the issue of paying for these benefits? And, second, would he address the specific suggestion of the Republican leader that the best way to pay for the benefits for 1.3 million unemployed people is to reduce protections in health insurance for over 300 million Americans?

Mr. REED. I thank the Senator from Illinois.

Let me first address the issue of paying for the benefits. The Senator from Illinois is correct, typically these benefits are considered emergency spending and they are not offset. In fact, the legislation which was passed in the wee hours of January 1, 2013, as I recall, had a 1-year extension of unemployment benefits, unpaid for. It received overwhelming votes—I believe 89 to 8—a huge majority of Republicans and Democrats coming together. So a year ago, this issue of pay-for was not even on the table. And, by the way, I think it probably led to the creation, given CBO's estimates going forward, of roughly 200,000 jobs this year because it was enacted and it wasn't offset.

It goes to a second point about sort of the bang for the buck. This is one of the best commonsensical programs we have, because when we give these benefits to individuals and don't take other benefits, other funds out of the economy, it has a multiplier effect, some people estimate $1.50 for every $1 in terms of economic activity. And it makes common sense. These funds go directly from the recipient, not to their savings account or to build up, but right out to buying gasoline, keeping cell phone service on. By the way, if you don't have a car and don't have a cell phone today, you can't find a job, you can't go to the interview, you can't get the call for the interview, you can't apply for the job. It is not 1955 anymore, where you take the bus and hand your clipboard across the barrier to the clerk. You have to have this electronic connection to be in the workforce, as well as mobility.

So from the point of view of an economic national perspective: One, we typically have done these as emergency spending; two, you get a big bang for the buck when you do it that way. There is a strong argument that is probably the most sensible approach.

With respect to the pay-for the Republican leader suggested, I concur entirely with the Senator from Illinois in that it is robbing Peter to pay Paul. I am sure, not only these folks who are struggling to find a job, but of the 1.3 million people who are currently receiving benefits, I have to assume a significant number—at least some of them—have preexisting conditions. For the first time many of them are able to qualify for health care benefits. And to take this protection away for millions of Americans—you say it is 1.9 million just in Kentucky alone. It is a huge number across the country—would be bad policy, and it would in fact for many families be a crushing blow. Again, I don't think we have to rob Peter to pay Paul.

From an economic standpoint, we have typically done this without offsets because we want to have the economic stimulus and the demand creation which comes. But from a basic fairness point of view, we are going to go ahead and give benefits of $300 a week to people who need them. I want to do that. But we are going to pay for it by telling some families: No, you don't get insurance. Or: You have to pay $25,000 a year because your child has asthma. That is not fair. It is not good common sense and it is not good economics. So I concur.

To resume: We talked about some of the big issues here and paying for this bill. This is all in the context of deficit reduction, which we have made significant progress on.

The Bowles-Simpson report suggested that over 10 years we cut $4 trillion from the deficit, and we achieved roughly about $2.5 trillion of that, most of it coming from cuts to programs—not revenue increases, but cuts. So we have made significant progress on deficit reduction. We have to do more, but we have to do it sensibly and logically. And we have proposals we have brought forward.

I must commend my colleagues in the Senate. This was on a bipartisan basis. We passed an immigration reform bill in this body. It has languished in the House. But in that bill alone, scored by CBO, will cut nearly another $1 trillion in the deficit, which will get us to that target or very close to that target. Yet it is languishing in the House. If we can pass it, then this issue of deficit—which has dominated and been very important over the last several years—is something we can practically resolve. And, by the way, as I suggested in my colloquy with Senator DURBIN, if we pass this legislation,

it will help too in terms of stimulating economic growth, et cetera.

There are many things we can do. But, again, I go back to this point. These people are in a desperate situation. As my constituent wrote, 30 years of work, middle-aged, getting retraining, 300 applications, no interviews, looking for anything. It is not just about dollars and a check. It is about dignity. It is about who you are.

We have to respond and we have to respond quickly. And we have the opportunity to do this. As we look at a longer term effort, it doesn't foreclose and it shouldn't foreclose considering programmatic changes, considering if we would offset or not. In response to Senator DURBIN, I pointed out, typically we don't offset this program but we have at certain times in the past. My preference would be, frankly, to get this bill done and then look at this issue over the longer term without preconditions. So we have to be clear. We can move this and we should move it.

Again, this question of offsets seems to be coming up more and more, as was reflected in the comments of the Senator from Illinois. As we initiated this program under President Bush back in 2008—and the unemployment rate was roughly 5.5 percent, much lower than it is today—we did not ask for offsets every time. In fact, it was the exception to the rule. I think now is not the time, particularly in this 90-day proposal which Senator HELLER and I have.

We have worked through some difficult issues, and I commend Senator MURRAY and Congressman RYAN particularly for the work on the budget, and I think we can work through this issue. So I again urge that we thoughtfully and very conscientiously and collaboratively work together longer term, but not ignore the crisis today—not leave 1.3 million, and more, Americans dangling, uncertain, desperate, frustrated, losing not only their income but in many respects their identity and their dignity. We can do better than that. Then we have the time—we have the time to work constructively, collaboratively, and cooperatively to come up with principled proposals to extend these benefits for hopefully the whole year.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

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

REMEMBERING SONNY ZETMEIR

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I appreciate the opportunity to be here on the Senate floor this morning since I am intruding on the discussion about unemployment insurance extension. However, I wish to take a few minutes to highlight the life of a Kansan who passed in late 2013.

At the end of last year, I learned of the death of a resident of Parsons, KS, in the southeast corner of our State. E.J. ''Sonny'' Zetmeir was a person of such optimism and so engaged in improving the lives of other people, I wanted to highlight and pay my respects to him and his family.

The community of Parsons lost one of its greatest champions when Sonny Zetmeir passed away. His humor and selflessness truly made an incredible impact upon that community.

Sonny had moved to Parsons, KS, from Grandview, MO, with his parents in 1965, along with a company his family owned that made cabinets. The company was called Grandview Products. He originally agreed with his family to stay in Parsons for a year to help get the business off the ground in its new location, but his commitment to his family and to his family's business continued to grow and he never left. He went on to purchase the company from his parents when they retired in 1982, and he helped build it into the outstanding cabinetmaking business it is today.

Under his leadership, Grandview Products grew from a local small business with 24 employees to a $50 million company with 430 employees, shipping cabinets from coast to coast. Today, the company is the largest employer in Parsons, and it also owns a facility in the neighboring community of Cherryvale.

Sonny's legacy as a businessman is rivaled only by his commitment to his community and improving the lives of others around him. As president and CEO of Grandview Products, he cared deeply about the health and well-being of his employees and their families. Through the recession of 2008, he fought hard to keep the company's doors open and keep as many employees as possible at work. When Grandview Products regained its footing, he worked to bring many of the former employees back to work.

Even when he received the devastating cancer diagnosis that would ultimately take his life, just a few weeks later, Sonny's thoughts immediately went to the well-being of his employees and their families. His wife Sophia relayed this story about his final weeks. She says:

> His number one concern was the company and his employees. It wasn't just his employees, it was the families that he was responsible for . . . Sonny was able to have a meeting with 216 employees. First, they all got a raise . . . so they wouldn't be afraid for their futures. No raises had been given in 5 years because of the recession. We're making money now, so everyone got a raise. Then, he told them who was going to be running what departments. Then, he told them how sick he was.

But his concerns for others and selflessness extended well beyond his business. He was passionate about Grandview Products being a locally owned company, and he felt a calling to serve the community through his service.

Over the years, Sonny donated cabinets to community projects, churches, and schools. He also encouraged his employees to be charitable in whatever capacity they were able. In fact, Sonny was so dedicated to giving back to the local community that he would only buy Girl Scout cookies from Girl Scouts in his home counties of Labette and Montgomery.

His service, honors, and achievements are numerous, and they include two terms as a trustee of Labette Community College and chairman of its capital fund campaign; 6 years as Labette County Republican chairman; board member of Meadowlark Girl Scout Council; and many years as president of the Parsons Area Community Foundation.

Sonny was named Parsons Chamber Business Person of the Year and the Kansas State Chamber Employer of the Year in 2003. He received the Kansas Manufacturers Association management appreciation award in 2007, and in 2008 he was chosen to receive the Cardinal Citation Award by Labette Community College. Since 1985 the Zetmeirs have cosponsored the Fourth of July fireworks at Marvel Park in Parsons.

I have always believed what we do here in the Nation's Capital is important, but the reality is we change the world one person at a time. So while what we do in the Senate matters, so much more is accomplished by a person like Sonny. Sonny Zetmeir lived that life. By investing his time and talent and financial support into the community where he lived, he made a difference every day. His involvement in the community and his selflessness serves as an inspiration and should be a role model for every American.

He was married to his wife Sophia for 51 years and was a devoted father to their 3 daughters: Ellen, Joan, and Amy. I ask the Senate to join me today in extending our heartfelt sympathies to Sonny's wife and to his family as they begin this new year in the absence of their loved one.

He was loved by them, and he will be greatly missed. If one's value in life is determined by whether or not you made a difference while you were here on this Earth, Sonny's life was priceless. God bless him and let him be a role model for all of us.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, 1.3 million people already have not had a happy new year. That is because, when we tried to extend the emergency unemployment insurance before the holidays, the Republican leadership said no. The temperatures may be dropping to new lows, but we should not freeze unemployment benefits.

When the economy was collapsing and AIG, the multinational insurance company, needed funds, we found that money for AIG. But when the Americans who are still recovering from the very recession caused by these institutions need more unemployment insurance, we just cannot seem to find a way to get it done.

These are not just numbers. These people, 1.3 million people across the country and 60,000 in my home State of Massachusetts, now face the harsh reality in 2014 that their country no longer has their backs.

One of these people is named Vera Volk. She is from Lynn, MA, just north

of Boston. She is a 20-year employee in the biotech/pharmaceutical industry who was laid off in May of 2013. Her layoff was in part due to sequestration, cuts in the Federal funding of biotech last year.

Last month Vera lost her unemployment benefits when the emergency unemployment insurance program ended. Vera has suffered a double injustice. First, her job was eliminated through sequestration, and then she was denied the extension of her unemployment benefits. Without the additional unemployment insurance, Vera and her family now need help to obtain food and medical assistance. In the near future, Vera's family faces the loss of their car and their home. Thousands of families in Massachusetts are facing similar but equally difficult decisions due to the termination of this critical program.

Published reports say that unemployment insurance kept 2.5 million Americans, including 600,000 children, out of poverty last year alone. That is why I am a cosponsor of the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Extension Act that Senators REED and HELLER have introduced, to reinstate and continue Federal support for the emergency unemployment insurance program until the end of March. Under that legislation, unemployed residents of Massachusetts such as Vera Volt would be eligible to receive up to 35 weeks of additional unemployment benefits.

Today, there are approximately 11.3 million Americans out of work and looking for a job. In Massachusetts, the unemployment rate is 7.1 percent and approximately 245,000 are looking for work. Unfortunately, in too many cities such as Lawrence, New Bedford, and Springfield—all over Massachusetts there are cities with much higher unemployment rates. Those unemployed workers in Massachusetts and across this country are finding it extremely difficult to find a job in this market. According to the Economic Policy Institute, for every one job opening there are 3.1 unemployed workers. So 2 out of every 3 job seekers have no job that they can actually find. Yet we are going to pretend that there is a job for them to be able to find.

There are many people who believe they are not working hard enough to find a job. Let me tell you something. Back in 2000, the unemployment rate in the United States of America went down to 3.8 percent. Guess what happened. People who were unemployed took those jobs. When unemployment goes down to 3.8 percent, when the government and the private sector are doing their job, people come to work.

In Massachusetts in 2000, unemployment went down to 2.8 percent. People were not hiding under their beds. People were not pretending they could not work. When the job was there, people took it. This is not ancient history; this is 2000, 3.8 percent unemployment, 2.8 percent unemployment for the State of Massachusetts. People who are offered a job will take a job. The jobs are not there. It is not the fault of these families. It is not the fault of these job seekers. We should not be punishing them. We should not be punishing their families because this capitalist system is not producing the jobs right now.

We have to reach out with a helping hand to these families so they can make it through this difficult time when the system is failing them. Instead, we are going to blame them for not finding jobs that do not exist. It is a beautiful circular argument where you never have to help the people who are actually being victimized by a failure in the economy. The truth is—and I restate this—when it went down to 3.8 percent unemployment in 2000, employers called these people back and said we want to put you to work, and the workers said, yes, we are ready to do it.

Here we are, once again, back in this cycle where too many people are pointing the finger at the worker when we know the worker will do the job. We have to be honest. The system, this capitalist system, this interaction between the government and capitalism right now is not producing the jobs for these workers. We have to work on that. That is our responsibility. We should be humble enough to say that it is the government, it is the private sector, not working together smarter—not harder—in order to accomplish these goals for all of these workers across our country.

If we did that, I think that ultimately we would have the very interesting result, according to all economists, of actually injecting more funding into the economy, creating more jobs, not destroying an additional 200,000 or 300,000 additional jobs this year because we did not inject the funding that would be provided to the unemployed that would be spent on the economy that would keep it on the upward tick it is on right now.

Instead, paradoxically, we are going to wind up with Republicans, if they are successful in cutting off this funding for long-term unemployment, seeing unemployment actually rise instead of being lower.

We have to work together in a bipartisan fashion in order to make smart investments now that will create the jobs, continue our country's economic recovery, and lower unemployment. I believe that our national strategy for job growth must continue to emphasize the areas where we excel as a nation. It is education, it is health care, it is biotech, it is clean tech, it is technology in general, and it is the investment into these areas that continues to give us the opportunity to be an engine for job growth in the world.

But while we chase this dawn of a brighter economy, we must not leave behind millions of Americans and their families. Let's not punish those who are already the victims and who continue to be the victims of a Wall Street collapse because we, as a nation, fail to understand and identify these innocent victims who still sit up there with their families.

I hope we can come together on a bipartisan basis to continue this program which is such a lifeline to the unemployed, their families and our economy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, first of all, on the bill before us, we should be sure to continue to remember, if you are an employee and do lose your job today or tomorrow or in coming weeks, in every State you immediately qualify for 6 months of unemployment. In States that have high unemployment you immediately qualify for an additional 13 to 20 weeks.

There are really two different debates going on here today. One is, is this really a long-term plan or a long-term policy? I suggest if this Congress and the administration spent the kind of effort and time on what it takes to create private sector jobs or encourage the environment where that happens, we would be spending our time much more wisely than we are as we continue to perpetuate a program that the majority would suggest should not even be paid for and many would suggest is just not a program at all.

Other things that are affecting our economy is why I came to the floor today. There are a number of things, from constantly talking about more taxes to higher utility bills to more regulation to, obviously, this overwhelming discussion about health care. I noticed the majority leader this weekend said that roughly a third of all the people who have been added to the insured roles because of the Affordable Care Act were because of a bill I introduced in 2009 that would allow dependents or children to stay on their family policies longer. I was the only one who introduced that bill in the House. I don't think it was introduced in the Senate. I thought it was a good idea then. I think it is a good idea now. Apparently, it is such a good idea that a third of all the people who have insurance that did not have insurance before are just because of that bill.

I have the bill before me. It was H. Res. 3887. It is 3½ pages that could have passed by itself—not 2,700 pages, 3½ pages that would have added a third of all of the people the majority of the Senate said had been added because of the Affordable Care Act. No taxpayer money involved; 3½ pages that would not have disrupted anybody else's insurance.

There were other solutions out there that would have made a lot more sense. I am tired of hearing from the administration that nobody else had any other ideas. Apparently my idea was one-third of all the people who have been added to insurance, according to the majority leader. Apparently, I had a third of all of the ideas, and they were in 3½ pages with no taxpayer cost.

Just as I suspect is the case with every Senator, I am getting letters, postings on our Facebook page, contacts through all of the social media every day, from Missourians who are seeing this is not working out like they thought it was going to work out. At Ozark Technical Community College in Springfield, MO, my hometown, the adjunct faculty there, as is the case in many community colleges, has taught an awful lot of the courses. I think 58 percent of the courses taught are taught not by full-time faculty members but by part-time members. The problem is those faculty members are now more part-time than they were before. Many of them were teaching 30 credit hours per year prior to this year. But largely because of the Affordable Care Act, they are now teaching 24 credit hours. They lost that percentage of their work, that percentage of their pay, that percentage of their ability to work with and be dedicated to students.

According to the Springfield newspaper, the Affordable Care Act is one of the reasons that for those faculty members, 58 percent of all the credit hours taught are taught by people many of whom were teaching 30 credit hours and are now are teaching 24 credit hours. There is only one reason that they are working 24 hours a week instead of 30, and that is because 30 is the point where benefits, according to the Affordable Care Act, have to be offered at a level that is defined by the Affordable Care Act, not defined by the community college.

In fact, some community college in America, I am sure, gave some benefits before for people who were part of the adjunct faculty, just not the benefits the Federal Government appears to think are absolutely necessary.

Let me go through a few emails from people who reached out to our office in recent days.

Jeffrey, from Blue Springs, MO, is a small business owner who offers health care benefits to his employees. Jeffrey said:

> It feels like a bait and switch. Get everyone to drop the coverage they liked, then stick it to them once company provided healthcare is no longer available.

When I was home—as I was for much of the break we just had—I asked people: What are you doing with your health care? Employer after employer who doesn't have 50 employees and is not impacted by this is saying: I think the government is about to take this over, and before they get in, I am getting out.

The 12 people at the dentist's office and the 36 people at the radio station either lost their health care January 1 or already know they are going to lose it next January 1, and the only reason is the so-called Affordable Care Act.

Marsha, out of Auxvasse, MO, has three children who are all under the age of 5. Her husband's employer has been informed that because of ObamaCare, they will have to absorb more than $1 million in order to keep providing insurance for their employees. The employer is still trying to do that, but the coverage is not what it was, the deductible is higher than it was, and one of the messages is ''We may not be able to do this much longer.''

Sabra and her husband, from Purdy, MO, were notified that they will lose health care—and did lose their health care—on December 31 because of the health care act. She said:

> We live on less than $14,000. Now we are at a point where we have to make a choice, food or medication, both of which I can no longer afford. So I choose to go without the much needed medication.

Theresa's husband—they are from Joplin, MO—lost his coverage on December 31. When she tried to sign up for health coverage at healthcare.gov, she was told they were ineligible because they were incarcerated. It turns out neither of them has ever been arrested or incarcerated at all, but they were ineligible because they were incarcerated.

I guess the greater point there is that he lost his health care. She would not have been on healthcare.gov and found out—much to her surprise—that the government believes she is incarcerated if her husband hadn't lost his health care at work.

Melanie, from St. Charles, MO, is a single mother of three. Her employers cut her hours because of ObamaCare. She is no longer able to work more than 28 hours a week and had to find two additional part-time jobs to make up for the job she lost.

Here is what she said:

> I feel like the government is working against me, and I am the person they say they are trying to help.

Jean, from St. Louis, said her insurance was canceled because of the President's health care plan. The most similar plan she could find in the exchange to the one she had before cost $775 per month, which is more than double what she was paying before the Affordable Care Act.

She said:

> Why did we break a healthcare system that allowed people to find what they needed, instead of just government making improvements to it?

Jefferson City Schools, which is in the same city as our State capital, said the health care plan will cost their school district $150,000. They have to pay for health insurance for substitute teachers, which they didn't pay for in the past. There are people who are listening to this who will think: That is fine; they are paying for substitute teachers. Many of those substitute teachers are no longer allowed to work 30 hours a week in school districts all over America, and then there are others in districts, such as this one, where it costs $150,000 more than it did.

The district officials in the article I read didn't go as far as to say the Federal Government is hurting more than it is helping, but they did point out that $150,000 is about three full-time teachers whom they won't hire whom they might have been able to hire otherwise.

Barbara, from Novinger, MO, said:

> For the first time in 50 years, my husband and I do not have health care. My hours have been reduced from 40 to 28 hours a week and they pulled out our insurance at work.

Interestingly, employers who provided insurance for years because they thought it was the right thing to do and the competitive thing to do are now taking a different view of this when the government begins to tell them what they have to do.

I think it is one of the most interesting applications of the health care law. When the government begins to tell you what you have to do, then suddenly it is OK not to do anything except what you have to do. How do you meet that criteria? How do you draw that line? You have people work less than 30 hours, you don't create new jobs, or you outsource your work.

Let me give three or four more examples as I finish with my time on the floor.

Sandra, from Springfield, is upset that her health care plan will require them to have pediatric dentistry and maternity care.

She said:

> I'm upset that my health care plan will require my husband and I to have pediatric dentistry and maternity care that we do not need to have.

I don't know how many letters like that all of us have received. The benefits are supposed to be better than the insurance they had, but for a whole lot of people, it turns out these are benefits they simply don't need. Suddenly, they are paying for benefits they don't need, and people who don't have insurance can have insurance once they get sick. How is that supposed to make any kind of economic sense or health care sense?

Mark, from Chesterfield, MO, said that his plan was canceled because his plan—back to my point, I suppose—didn't meet the requirements of the President's health care plan.

Here is what he said:

> My current plan will no longer be offered after December of 2014. This is a direct contradiction to President Obama's promise that I could keep my plan.

Some people lost their insurance on December 31 of last year. Other people have already been told they are going to lose their insurance December 31 of next year.

This letter is from somebody who works at the Ozarks Medical Center and lives in West Plains.

> We are a sole community provider, with the closest hospital providing the same level of care or above over 100 miles away. The loss of this healthcare system will devastate the economics of this community and surrounding communities.

What we are going to find is a system that is not designed to meet the needs of the people of the country. What we could have done is we could have given

them more choices to figure out what they need to meet their needs instead of coming up with a system that simply is going to leave so many people who had insurance 2 years ago without insurance 2 years from now. Surely that wasn't the goal, but people in this Chamber and Washington, DC, had better wake up and figure this out. Whether that was the goal or not, it is going to be the result if we don't do something about it.

The best thing to do is to start over—now that we have learned all we have learned over the last 4 years—and make changes to the best health care system in the world that will make it even better and work for more people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, despite the differences between the different sides of the aisle on the underlying legislation—particularly on the refusal so far of the majority leader to actually pay for the $6 billion cost of the 3-month extension of long-term unemployment benefits and adding that $6 billion to the $17.3 trillion national debt—I am confident both parties would like to find a way to deal with the problem of America's long-term unemployed.

There are people who don't necessarily want to collect unemployment benefits because they want a job and they want to work. They want to provide for their families.

Even as we stand here and debate yet another extension of Federal unemployment benefits, it is important that we keep the big picture in mind. Obviously, what we are talking about—just to remind everybody—is the basic unemployment program, which provides half a year or 26 weeks of unemployment benefits. Democrats want to extend that emergency measure, which was enacted after the fiscal crisis of 2008 and now appears to be permanent. We have spent $250 billion since 2008, and to continue to recklessly borrow money from our creditors, such as the Chinese, and others, and leave it for our children to pay back—how responsible is that?

The best way to help the unemployed and the best way to help Americans and America is to increase economic growth and increase job creation.

We had a grand experiment known as the stimulus, which was back in 2009 when we had $1 trillion worth of borrowed money. Grand projections were made at that time that if the Federal Government would just spend borrowed money rather than have the private sector do it, we would see unemployment rates plummet, and, of course, that has proven not to be the case. In fact, this economic recovery after the great recession of 2008 has been the slowest economic recovery we have seen since the Great Depression back in the 1930s.

Congress and the Federal Government can't adopt policies that hamper growth and discourage job creation and expect the economy to grow and jobs to be created. Let me say that again. You can't adopt policies that actually discourage small businesses from starting a business or growing their business and creating jobs and expect jobs and economic growth to follow. What that means is that, notwithstanding the good intentions of those who embrace some of these policies, they are actually hurting the unemployed no matter how many times they want to extend unemployment benefits on a long-term basis. Unfortunately, that is exactly what the Obama administration has done time and time again.

Let me say that I am confident President Obama would like to help people who can't find work. I am sure the President believes as well that ObamaCare will improve the health care system for 300-plus million Americans. The problem is that we have seen that this experiment in big government and government takeovers—whether it is of the health care system or through a $1 trillion stimulus package—simply has not worked. At some point good intentions have to give way to reality and the facts, especially when those good intentions are not translated into good results.

Let me give one example. Recently, I was in Tyler, TX—which is over in northeast Texas near Louisiana—at a restaurant doing a roundtable on the impact of the Affordable Care Act, or ObamaCare, on employers, such as the owner of the small diner where we met. He told many tales, but one story that stuck in my mind was of a single mother who, instead of working her normal 40 hours a week, was relegated to a part-time job of 30 hours a week, and that is in order for her employer to avoid the penalties and mandates of ObamaCare. So what this single mom has to do in order to compensate for her lost income is to find another part-time job. So instead of working 40 hours at one job, she works 60 hours at two jobs in order to make up for that lost income. Here again, if the President and his allies think we are going to make up for the lost wages this single mom is making by having her workweek cut from 40 hours to 30 hours, I think they need to think again. That is what I mean when I say the policies of this administration have actually hurt the very people they now say they want to help by increasing long-term unemployment benefits.

It is true that facts are stubborn, and there is a mountain of evidence that says if we pay people too generously, it actually discourages some people from actively seeking employment. In fact, several years ago, President Obama's own former chief White House economist said that ''job search is inversely related to the generosity of employment benefits.'' Translated, that means if we pay people too much not to work, some people are going to be persuaded not to look for work.

Indeed, I know there are perhaps many explanations for the slow economic recovery and the high rate of unemployment, which is up around 7 percent, including the largest number of people who simply dropped out of the workforce in the last 30 years, known as the labor participation rate. There are a lot of reasons for why we find ourselves where we are now. But adding benefits for people not to work and not dealing with the underlying problem of slow economic growth and people being discouraged from creating new jobs or making full-time work part-time work—we need to be looking at the root causes of the problem as well as the problems and the policies of this administration time and time again.

The majority leader and his allies want to extend benefits for 3 more months—3 more months. This is on top of the 26 weeks which are part of the basic unemployment compensation package. But my question is, if we want to extend it for 3 months, where will we find ourselves 3 months from now? Will we be met with yet another request for the extension of long-term unemployment benefits that adds another $6 billion to the deficit? What about 3 months later?

I hope I can be forgiven for saying this feels like a political exercise more than a sincere effort to deal with the underlying problem of joblessness in our country, particularly since we are $17.3 trillion in debt, something the President seems to not care one bit about. Also, as the Federal Reserve begins to wind down their bond-buying program, we are going to see interest rates go up and we are going to end up spending more and more tax dollars just to pay our creditors for the debt while we ought to be focused on dealing with some of the root causes of unemployment.

Let me get back to my point. Some Republicans have offered to find ways to pay for this 3-month extension. My impression is that if that were done, it would probably happen—for 3 months. But we have also suggested long-term reforms that would make our system of unemployment insurance more effective. Senator ALEXANDER, a former Secretary of Education and former Governor of Tennessee, discussed yesterday at our conference lunch some ideas he has, including making Pell grants—I think they are in excess of $5,000 per person—available so people can study job retraining at community colleges during that 26 weeks of unemployment. So if they can't find a job in their existing field, they can learn new skills that will allow them to get well-paying jobs in another field, using those Pell grants for job retraining.

There are a lot of good ideas about how we can improve the unemployment system if, in fact, the majority leader will just allow it. He remains agnostic, I would say, at this point about whether he is even going to allow us to offer amendments to pay for the 3-month extension or some of these good, solid ideas of dealing with the root problems

rather than just continuing to treat the symptom with the same lack of success in terms of decreasing joblessness and getting the economy back on track.

I know many of our colleagues on the other side share these same goals. Yet the majority leader has made it clear this week that he is more interested in rhetoric and political gamesmanship than in real reform. That is why I objected on Monday night when 17 Senators were missing. The majority leader wanted to have a vote on cloture that was doomed to fail. Why? Not because he was interested in a real solution but because he wants a ''gotcha'' moment, to say, look, with 17 Senators missing, the 60-vote threshold for cloture was not going to be achieved. What possible purpose could be served by having that vote then instead of doing it on Tuesday? The vote was moved to Tuesday, at which time that 60-vote threshold was met. The only conclusion I can draw is the majority leader was interested in a ''gotcha'' moment instead of a real solution. Fortunately, he reconsidered and moved it to Tuesday.

So far, the majority leader is refusing to pay for this extension of benefits. They are refusing to change the program by modernizing it, making it more efficient, and helping people learn new skills so they can get back to work, and they are refusing to consider any other ideas than those cooked up in the majority leader's conference room behind closed doors.

I have in my hand 11 Republican amendments, many of them are bipartisan or they enjoy bipartisan support. For example, Senator PAUL from Kentucky has the Economic Freedom Zones Act. I saw the President announce this morning—I think there were five and he calls them by another name—basically, the same sort of concept, looking at blighted areas and trying to provide incentives for investment and job creation in those areas of high unemployment. So Senator PAUL has a bill that would deal with that.

Senator PORTMAN from Ohio has a reform that would prohibit simultaneous collection of disability benefits and unemployment. That is double-dipping, it seems to me, and something we ought to be dealing with.

Senator MORAN of Kansas has a bill he calls the Startup Act 2.0, which is a jobs bill.

Senator COATS of Indiana wants to offset the extension of unemployment insurance by delaying individual and employer mandates for 1 year. The President has already done that unilaterally for employer mandates. Why not delay the individual mandate for 1 year and use that to offset this extension for 3 months of unemployment insurance?

So there are plenty of ideas out there. I mentioned some of them. Both of the Senators from Oklahoma have amendments that would be good amendments to offer on this legislation. The Senator from Louisiana has one. The Senator from New Hampshire has one. So these are at least 11 ideas. If the majority leader would allow us to actually have a real debate as opposed to a political exercise, I believe we could come up with a bipartisan consensus that would actually help deal with the underlying problem and not just treat the symptoms in a way that ignores those root causes.

Let me get back to what I think is cause No. 1 for the difficulties many small businesses are having and the difficulties many people who work for those small businesses are having; that is, ObamaCare. I realize some people would like us to believe this is all about the Web site and once the Web site gets fixed it is all going to be hunky-dory, regardless of the fact that more people have lost their current coverage by cancellation than have been signed up on the ObamaCare exchanges.

The administration seems particularly proud of the fact that ObamaCare has added hundreds of thousands of Americans to Medicaid. As we all know, this is the safety net program designed to help low-income people. The problem is Medicaid itself is a fundamentally broken program that is failing our neediest citizens. The problems with Medicaid are a stark reminder that access to coverage does not mean the same thing; access to coverage is different from having access to care.

Here is what I mean by that. In Texas only about one-third of doctors will see a new Medicaid patient. Someone might say that doesn't make much sense. It does if we consider the fact that Medicaid—this government program—pays doctors about 50 cents on the dollar of what a private insurance coverage would pay, and because it reimburses at such a low rate, some physicians have simply said: I can't continue to add new patients to my practice and be compensated 50 cents on the dollar. So they have limited their practice. That is what I mean when I say there is a difference between access to coverage and access to care.

Medicaid is sorely in need of reform. All across the country, Medicaid patients have been forced to endure the humiliating experience of walking into a doctor's office and then getting turned away because the office doesn't accept Medicaid for the reason I mentioned.

We have also seen lawsuits brought by providers and patients against their own State Medicaid Program, saying the reimbursement rates are so low, doctors can't actually see patients at that price. In Texas, a 2012 survey conducted by the Texas Medical Association shows that a large majority of Texas physicians agree that Medicaid is broken and should not be used as a mechanism to reduce the uninsured. Despite all of that, there are those who say that ObamaCare's Medicaid expansion will help hospitals cope with excessive emergency room visits. Again, the problem is that flies in the face of the facts. In a recent study in Oregon, Medicaid recipients in Oregon went to the emergency room 40 percent more frequently than people without health insurance. One might ask why in the world would they go to the emergency room for routine care if they have Medicaid coverage? Because they can't find a doctor to see them at Medicaid prices. Again, ObamaCare is creating the illusion of access but with no real access to care but for through the emergency room.

There are much better ways to expand health coverage than simply pushing Americans into a dysfunctional safety net program that is supposed to help the most vulnerable in our society but which does not. Our side of the aisle made that argument consistently 4 years ago, but the President and his allies chose not to listen and decided to go it themselves on a purely party-line vote when ObamaCare was passed. Maybe after voters render their verdict on ObamaCare in November, we will have another chance to revisit this issue.

Rather than asking the States to expand their existing Medicaid Programs, the Federal Government should give each State greater flexibility to design a program that meets those States' needs. What works best in Texas may not work as well in New York and vice versa. What we ought to do is give the States a defined amount of Medicaid funds with very few strings attached so they can create innovative programs that provide quality care. One of the good things about doing that is the States would actually be the laboratories of democracy we have talked about from time to time, where we can actually learn from best practices and innovations, and other States can then use that knowledge to improve access to quality health care at a more affordable price.

I will tell my colleagues that despite all of our differences over ObamaCare, Republicans and Democrats alike both want to find a way to make health care more affordable and more accessible. Unfortunately, ObamaCare has proven not to have worked out as the most ardent advocates hoped or promised.

Republicans believe the best way to achieve these goals is to leave the choices in the hands of patients. That is the fundamental difference between ObamaCare and the alternatives. The President wants the government to choose the plan, to choose the doctor, and to make those decisions for patients. We think it is better to leave those choices in the hands of patients, in consultation with their own personal physicians—a doctor they have come to trust over the years—to help counsel them on what are wise health care choices for themselves and their families. We can add to that by increasing transparency and enlarging a real marketplace so people can shop, as consumers do day in and day out. We know that kind of transparency in

terms of price and competition, when it comes to people providing a service, improves the quality, and it lowers costs. That is what our market economy teaches us. We know, I would hope by now, the answer is not to place more people into a broken government program that takes their choices away.

As I said earlier, good intentions do not always produce good results. But I would hope we would learn from our mistakes as individuals, as a Congress. The results of the last 5 years include some pretty miserable outcomes that I would hope would cause us to reconsider, as we go forward together, to try to address the problem of chronic joblessness in our society.

As I said, the last 5 years have given us the longest period of high unemployment since the Great Depression, a massive decline in labor workforce participation. The percentage of people actually looking for work has declined to a 30-year low. It has also given us growing income inequality—the thing the President says he cares the most about, but he does not offer any proposals that deal with the underlying cause, merely treating the symptoms by paying people extended unemployment benefits.

We have seen an explosion of job-killing regulations. I am reminded when I see the Presiding Officer that I think the city with the lowest unemployment rate in America is Bismarck, ND, if I am not mistaken. Close behind that is Midland, TX. The two things they have in common are the shale gas renaissance and the jobs that have been created by unleashing this great American job-creating machine and particularly in the energy sector. So what we need to do is look for ways to avoid some of the job-killing regulations, which make it harder, not easier, to produce those jobs in places such as North Dakota and Texas.

We have also seen millions of canceled health care policies, millions of people with higher premiums, not lower premiums like the President offered and promised. We have seen an unprecedented increase in our national debt and an incredible complacency when it comes to adding $6 billion more to our national debt for a 3-month extension of long-term unemployment benefits.

We have seen, not surprisingly, associated with all of this a huge erosion in the public trust in the Federal Government. That is why this side of the aisle has been pushing, and will continue to push, a new set of policies that address the biggest concerns of the American people and the biggest challenges facing the American dream.

The only question is this list of 11 bills that Senators on this side of the aisle would like to offer on this underlying legislation, not just to treat the symptoms of unemployment, but actually deal with the root causes—whether the majority leader is going to allow those amendments to be taken up, debated, and voted on, and to allow the Senate to work its will on a bipartisan basis. That remains to be seen. If he does not—and recent history does not give me a lot of optimism that he will—then I think it will become even more transparent that this is not an exercise in trying to help people who are out of work. This is an exercise in trying to politicize this in a way that distracts attention from the epic failure of ObamaCare and its wet blanket effect on the American economy and job creation.

So I guess hope springs eternal. You cannot serve in this body and hope to make a difference in the lives of the American people without being an optimist by nature, but, unfortunately, in the case of the majority leader and this, there is some doubt in my mind. I hope he proves me wrong. I hope he will open this up to an amendment process that will allow us to deal with the root causes and will not just be another exercise in gotcha Washington politics.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. DONNELLY. Madam President, family is important to Hoosiers. We work hard every day to care and to provide for our loved ones and to give our children and grandchildren the opportunity to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

We also recognize that strong families are often built on good jobs. Good jobs allow us to put food on the table, educate our children, and ultimately retire in dignity, and good jobs are, of course, critical for stronger communities and a vibrant economy. It all starts with jobs. Without good jobs, nothing else works.

As I have said before, most Americans think Congress can do something—even if it is just not doing any harm—to help create jobs and strengthen our economy. Unfortunately, over the last year, the partisan gridlock that has too often defined Congress has been in full force.

During the starkest example of the gridlock, the government shut down. A poll found that Americans cited Congress as the single biggest threat to our economy. That should have been a wake-up call for all of us, a clear signal to collectively focus on working together to give our families the opportunity to compete and succeed in the American economy.

Opportunity means creating the conditions for businesses to expand and to hire more workers. It means an economic environment that encourages the private sector to invest and innovate in an ever-changing global economy. It means providing American workers with the training they need to get the skills and education necessary to fill the jobs available today and to adapt to fill the jobs and careers of the future.

As we start a new year, I encourage us all to refocus our efforts and our attention on our responsibilities to the families we represent. To that end, I am focused on my opportunity agenda—a blueprint of commonsense policies designed to expand economic opportunities for Hoosier workers and workers all across our country, for businesses, and for their families in four critical areas where we can help create more good jobs: No. 1, going all-in on American energy; No. 2, providing American workers the training necessary to fill the jobs available today; No. 3, investing in our infrastructure; and, No. 4, keeping our country competitive through exports and innovation.

Why are these four areas important to families across our country? As the Presiding Officer knows, a strong domestic energy economy is at the foundation of our potential for economic success. Affordable, reliable energy allows families to heat their homes and to travel to work and to school. Affordable, reliable energy ensures businesses can manufacture products efficiently, on time, and can compete in our global economy. Affordable, reliable American energy ensures that we are investing our money here at home rather than each year sending hundreds of billions of dollars overseas to buy energy that is already here in the United States. The production of affordable, reliable American energy here at home creates jobs here at home, not overseas.

Our country is blessed with abundant energy resources. In fact, in my State of Indiana, we produce coal, biofuels, wind and solar energy, and natural gas—and we can do more.

Going all-in on American energy also means establishing smart regulations that protect our environment while also allowing our economy to grow. My home State of Indiana is a large producer of coal, as I know the Presiding Officer's home State of North Dakota is. We are annually in the top 10 of coal-producing States in the Nation. The coal industry supports over 3,000 jobs in 10 southwestern Indiana counties and contributes over $750 million to our State's economy.

Hoosiers count on the affordable, reliable energy from our home State coal. This is why efforts to regulate carbon dioxide emissions at coal plants should be realistic about the technology that exists now and not negatively impact our economy. If we do not address these standards in a commonsense way, the affordable, reliable energy that Hoosier families and businesses depend on is in doubt. We should also continue full speed ahead on technology efforts that will make coal a cleaner and cleaner energy source for all of our energy needs in the years ahead.

Indiana is also a leader in biofuel production, where more than 600 Hoosiers work at 13 ethanol plants and 5 biodiesel plants across our State. I have seen firsthand the good work being done at many of these plants. They use products grown here at home

to produce fuel here at home, to power vehicles here at home.

With ethanol and other biofuels, we are not, again, sending our hard-earned money overseas. We are putting our neighbors to work. We are putting their hard work into creating more energy and more opportunity in our communities and across our country. This industry is another example of American-made energy and American-made entrepreneurial leadership.

Second, it is very important we help our workforce hit the ground running by improving workforce development and training. The Department of Labor estimates there are 3.9 million job openings in the United States right now, despite a national unemployment rate of 7 percent and millions of Americans looking for work.

Estimates by the Manufacturing Institute indicate there are as many as 600,000 job openings in our country that remain unfilled because employers cannot find workers who have the necessary skills to do that job. We must make a better effort to close this skills gap.

I often hear from Hoosier business owners, educators, and workers about the pressing need to close the skills gap and have people trained in all of these opportunities and skills. Workers need to know that the time they spend training is more likely to lead to employment in a good-paying job, as employers are more likely to hire people they know have the training that is needed to be productive on day one.

Third, it is important we invest in infrastructure. Indiana is called the ''Crossroads of America.'' In order to live up to our name, we need the best roads, the best rail, the best airports, the best waterways so we can continue to expand our logistics and other transportation industries. Today, 22 percent of our bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Seventeen percent of Indiana's roads are in poor or mediocre condition.

A good way to create jobs in Indiana and across the country is to establish the right conditions for investment in our country's infrastructure. I have and will continue to support encouraging investment by requiring government agencies to work together to cut redtape, set deadlines, and increase transparency.

We should be building things in this country, and that means expediting the transportation, energy, and other infrastructure projects that strengthen our economy.

Finally, it is important we keep Hoosier and all American businesses and industries competitive through the promotion of exports and innovation. We produce some of the best quality products in the world—from automobiles, to agricultural products, to medical devices—and we should continue to look for opportunities to sell these products to the rest of the world.

Manufacturing accounts for a big portion of Indiana's exports, and manufactured goods exports support nearly 23 percent of Indiana's manufacturing jobs. That is much higher than the national average. Small businesses account for nearly 17 percent of our exports. We need to do more to promote the good work of these Hoosier businesses.

American businesses are competing in an increasingly challenging global economy, and we must promote a global economy that is built on responsible and fair trade policies. I am a longtime supporter of cracking down on currency manipulation, which results in an unfair playing field for American manufacturers.

The Economic Policy Institute estimated that if we address global currency manipulation, we could reduce the U.S. goods trade deficit by up to $400 billion and create several million jobs right here at home, reducing our national unemployment rate. I have supported enhanced oversight of currency exchange rates, including new requirements that the Commerce Department investigate claims of undervalued foreign currency at the request of U.S. industry.

I also support using U.S. trade law to counter the economic harm to U.S. manufacturers caused by this currency manipulation, and tools to address the impact of this misalignment of currency on U.S. industries. We all know good trade policies create good jobs, fuel economic growth, and benefit consumers both at home and abroad. Yet we also must remember that trade only works when everyone is playing by the same rules.

That is why I testified before the U.S. International Trade Commission regarding the importance of maintaining existing antidumping and countervailing duty orders against unfairly traded imports of hot-rolled steel. The steel industry supports over 150,000 jobs in Indiana. These trade orders help maintain a level playing field for an already vulnerable domestic steel industry. Given a level playing field, Hoosier workers can compete with anyone in the world, which is why I was pleased the ITC ruled that these trade orders would be maintained.

It is critically important that our intellectual property is also respected and is also protected. We have a lot of work to do, but I am hopeful that Congress can learn from last year's dysfunction and start this year in a bipartisan way. Senators from both parties can agree, there is nothing more important to American families and American communities than good jobs. They want us to work for them and not worry about politics.

I look forward to continuing these opportunities and these efforts under my opportunity agenda. By working on commonsense, bipartisan ideas to go all in on American energy, to give workers the tools they need to hit the ground running, to invest in our infrastructure, and to keep homegrown businesses competitive through exports and innovation, we can help lower unemployment and build a stronger economy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The assistant majority leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, 50 years ago today, in his first State of the Union Address, President Lyndon Johnson committed America to what he called a war on poverty. Over the next several years, America conducted the most ambitions, determined, and successful campaign in history to reduce poverty since the Great Depression.

Later today, my friend Senator HARKIN, the chairman of the Senate HELP Committee, will speak in detail about the accomplishments of the war on poverty. I hope my colleagues will listen closely. Senator HARKIN himself has spent over four decades in Congress working to make sure these antipoverty programs continue to work.

We believe on our side of the aisle that we have to be careful in spending taxpayers' dollars. But we also believe in a safety net, a safety net for those Americans who, because of circumstances beyond their control, need a helping hand. I once worked for a man who served in the Senate. He was my inspiration to enter public life. I am honored today to have his Senate seat. He was Paul Douglas of Illinois. He once said, ''To be a liberal one does not have to be a wastrel.'' He went on to say, ''We must, in fact, be thrifty if we are to be really humane.'' I think we can balance both. We can help people who need a helping hand, but we can do it without wasting taxpayers' dollars.

So what did this war on poverty of 50 years ago, that has been much maligned, achieve? Medicare. Medicaid. The Head Start Program. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was the first time our Nation committed the Federal Government to helping local school districts; special education legislation, the Higher Education Act, which increased grants, loans, and work-study opportunities.

My story is a story that many can repeat. I went to college and law school borrowing money from the Federal Government. It was called the National Defense Education Act. I borrowed money to get through college and law school; otherwise, I could not have done it. The deal was that starting a year after graduation, you paid it back over 10 years at 3-percent interest. I like to think that loan from the government, which I paid back, was a good investment. It sure was in my life, for my family, and I hope some people in Illinois might think it was a good investment for the Nation. But it is an indication that a helping hand from the government can make a difference, a profound difference in a person's life.

Before the Higher Education Act and the war on poverty, just over 9 percent of Americans had college degrees.

Today almost one-third of Americans have at least a bachelor's degree. There has been no act of Congress, since President Lincoln pushed through the land grant college system during the Civil War, that has done more for higher education to democratize it and to give us the scientists, doctors, and other educated citizens we need.

Before the war on poverty, before the Higher Education Act, before Federal loans for students, take a look at the colleges and universities. It was the province of those who were well-off. It was the province of great alumni who took care of their sons and daughters. It was a very sophisticated group of people who went on to higher education. It did not include a lot of folks like me, the son of an immigrant woman who grew up in East Saint Louis, IL. But I got my chance, and millions like me got their chance, because of the war on poverty, because of the Higher Education Act, and because of the thoughtful programs of this Federal Government that gave me and many others a helping hand.

What else was in the war on poverty? The Civil Rights Act of 1964, one of the most transformative laws in our history; the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which some view as the most important civil rights legislation in our history; the Fair Housing Act of 1968; we expanded efforts to feed families who were hungry; we created the food stamp program, now known as SNAP; and we created the School Breakfast Program.

How important is the School Breakfast Program to America and to education? Visit a school. Meet the kids. Talk to the teachers about what a well-fed child is as a student compared to one who has stomach pains from lack of breakfast and lack of food.

A few years ago there was an interesting exchange, not surprisingly on the Glenn Beck show on Fox. There was an actor on there who was really upset about the growing role of the Federal Government. Here is what he said, this actor on Glenn Beck's Fox News show:

> We are a capitalistic society. Okay. I go into business and I don't make it, I go bankrupt. They, the government, aren't going to bail me out.

And then he added:

> I have been on food stamps and welfare. Anybody help me out? No.

Wait a minute. He was on food stamps and welfare. That came from the same government he was just maligning. Let me repeat that. This conservative actor said:

> I have been on food stamps and welfare. Anybody help me out? No.

That is an indication of how people get so far afield when they criticize the government without pausing to reflect. Folks used to say to us during the course of this health care debate: Keep government out of my Medicare. My Medicare is important to me. Do not mess it up. Do not let government—government created your Medicare. Government created Medicaid for the poor and disabled.

The idea or some variation on it seems to be the position of many of our friends across the aisle. When it comes to government efforts to reduce poverty and create opportunities for middle-income and poor families, they seem to think these programs are just going to reward the lazy.

We are in the middle of a debate right now on unemployment benefits. The belief on the Republican side of the aisle is, if you give people enough money to pay their rent and their utility bills, to put gas in their cars, those lazy people will never go to work.

I do not believe that. Will there be people who cheat the system? Of course. There are wealthy people cheating our tax system. But the fact is, the vast majority of Americans given a helping hand want to get back to work.

The extension of unemployment benefits is the humane and right thing to do. It used to be the bipartisan thing to do. Right now, we are divided. We could only get six Republicans to step up to extend unemployment benefits in America. Those benefits are now cut off at 27 weeks. The average person is out of work in our country for 38 weeks. I have met them and I have talked to them. Perhaps people on both sides of the aisle should. These folks want to get back to work. They are desperate to get back to work. But if you do not give them unemployment benefits they cannot put gas in the car, they cannot pay for their cell phone. In this day and age, as Senator REED of Rhode Island said on the floor, that is how you go to work and find a job. You need to have your cell phone and your car to get up and go. It is not a matter of taking a bus and filling out an application on a clipboard any more. We need to give those folks a helping hand. Government needs to do it, because at this point in their lives they desperately need it.

I say to my friends in the right conservative circles, put down those Ayn Rand books for a minute and take a look at the real world and listen to some real economists too. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office tells us that extending unemployment benefits for the long-term unemployed will create 240,000 jobs in America.

How is that possible? How can spending $26 billion on unemployment benefits create jobs? I thought these folks were out of work. What do they do with the money they receive in unemployment benefits? Do they put it into the stock market, into their savings account? No. They spend it. They buy clothes for their kids. They pay the utility bills. They fill up their cars with gas. They put it right back in the economy because they are living literally day-to-day. So 240,000 jobs will be created if we extend unemployment benefits. For those who say we should not, sadly they are reducing the number of jobs available. That is the fundamental point that many on the far right do not seem to understand. Helping to reduce poverty and create opportunity in America is going to help us all. All of us. It creates a stronger economy.

I know PAUL RYAN. He is my neighbor, being a Congressman from the neighboring State of Wisconsin. I like him. We served on the Simpson-Bowles Commission together. He is thoughtful. We disagree on a lot of issues, but he is a thoughtful, conscientious person. But when he calls America's social safety net a hammock that creates dependency and perpetrates poverty, he is just plain wrong.

Opponents of government action who look at the fact that there are still poor people in America and conclude that therefore the war on poverty failed are just as wrong as he is. The official poverty level looks only at cash income. It does not take into account noncash benefits such as SNAP or housing assistance.

A recent analysis by the Center on Budget Policies and Priorities used a broader, more accurate measure of poverty called the supplemental poverty measure. That measure looks not just at cash income but noncash benefits. Using this more accurate measure, the center found that government benefits elevated 40 million Americans out of poverty in 2011.

We have these Republican critics of the food stamp program who say: It is just plain wrong that so many people are drawing food stamps. They ought to go out and meet these people. Who are these people? Out of the 43, 44 million Americans drawing food stamps, over half of them are children, dependent children who are receiving enough money through the food stamp program for their parents to put food on the table. There is also a large portion of them who are elderly and disabled, and a large portion, 1 million, who are veterans. Those are the recipients. Many of those who qualify for food stamps are working. They are not getting a very good paycheck. They are earning the current minimum wage, which is not enough to get by. Food stamps give them a little extra help each month to keep food for their family. That is the reality of low-income, hard-working Americans, a reality which sadly this Chamber is removed from many times. This Chamber does not realize what people are up against.

Social Security has had the largest impact of any program. But means-tested programs, such as SNAP, the earned income child credit and the child tax credit, lifted 20 million Americans, including 8½ million children, out of poverty. When the Republicans in the House particularly want to cut back on these programs, they are going to push these hard-working, low-income families deeper into debt and further away from the basics they need in life.

The poverty rate in America is already too high. Growing income inequality should be an embarrassment

to all of us. Lifting 40 million Americans out of poverty through the war on poverty programs and government assistance is an undeniable success. Without the public social safety net, the poverty rate in America would be nearly twice what it is today.

Joe Califano served as the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare under President Johnson. Here is what he said 15 years ago:

> If there is a prize for the political scam of the 20th century, it should go to the conservatives for propagating as conventional wisdom that the Great Society programs of the 1960s were misguided and failed social experiments that wasted taxpayers' money.
>
> Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, from 1963 when Lyndon Johnson took office until 1970 as the impact of his Great Society programs were felt, the portion of Americans living below poverty dropped from 22.2 percent to 12.6 percent, the most dramatic decline over such a brief period in this century.

Califano went on to say:

> This reduction in poverty did not just happen, it was the result of a focused, tenacious effort to revolutionize the role of the Federal Government in a series of interventions that literally enriched the lives of millions of Americans.

Some of the critics say that it is the job of churches and charities, not government, to help those who have hit a rough patch in life.

One of my ''sheroes'' in life is a woman named Sister Simone Campbell. She is the director of NETWORK, a Catholic social justice organization, and she is probably better known as the ringleader of the ''Nuns on the Bus.''

Sister Simone Campbell testified last summer at a House hearing chaired by Congressman PAUL RYAN of Wisconsin. She said that Bread for the World has calculated how much money religious institutions and charities would have to raise just to make up for food stamp cuts proposed by last year's House Republican budget.

Sister Campbell said: Every church, synagogue, mosque, and house of worship in the United States—every one of them—would need to raise $50,000 each year for 10 years to make up for proposed cuts that the Republicans wanted to make in the food stamp program in the House of Representatives. That is only one cut that they have proposed.

To say that the charities of America, which are legendary and well deserved in terms of their praise—to say that they can take care of this problem ignores the reality.

Denigrating and decimating antipoverty programs won't reduce poverty or create jobs or strengthen America's struggling and shrinking middle class. As President Johnson said nearly 50 years ago: ''Our time is necessarily short and our agenda is already long.''

So we ask our friends on the other side of the aisle to work with us to help Americans. Please start off by extending unemployment benefits for 1.3 million Americans. For goodness sake, at this time of year when most of this country is facing bone-chilling cold in Wisconsin and Illinois—we just went through it this week. I have never seen conditions such as this that I can ever remember—and to think that it might be part of an unemployed worker's family, wondering if they might be able to pay that utility bill, keep the kids warm, put some food on the table, while they look for a job—and we pick this moment in time to cut unemployment benefits.

We are a caring and compassionate nation. If we can't stand behind those who are struggling at this point in life, who are we? What are we? There are all kinds of excuses that could be made, but at the bottom line it gets down to something very basic.

John Kasich is the Governor of Ohio. He and I came to know one another when we were both elected to the House of Representatives some years ago. He is a Republican. He is one of the few who won in 1982 and went on to become Governor of the State.

He had a moment of reflection the other day, which I will paraphrase. He said: I would like to say to my Republican friends, when you die and get to the pearly gates, St. Peter is not going to ask you how much you invested in your life in making government smaller, you are going to be asked what did you do to help the poor while you were on Earth?

That is a legitimate question Governor Kasich raised, not only for Republicans but for all of us. What have we done to help those people who are struggling to get by—those who would be very interested in a long-term debate about growing our economy but are more interested in putting food on the table today. That is what it is all about.

The war on poverty successfully raised Americans out of poverty. The government stepped in when there was no place else to turn. That is truly the role of government, to be there when there is no place else to turn.

The American family, through its government, stood by those who were less fortunate. We have to do the same thing.

I will close by saying the proposal Senator MCCONNELL made yesterday troubles me greatly. He said: We will pay for the extension of unemployment benefits, $26 billion, but the way we will pay for it—the Republicans suggested—was to eliminate that section of the Affordable Care Act which guarantees that you can't discriminate against people because of preexisting medical conditions.

What the situation was before this law passed was, of course, if someone had a child with diabetes, if their wife was recovering from cancer, they might not be able to buy health insurance or if they did, it would be too expensive. We changed that. We said they can't discriminate against people with preexisting conditions.

Senator MCCONNELL came to the floor yesterday and said: We want to eliminate the personal responsibility section when it comes to the Affordable Care Act, we want to eliminate the so-called individual mandate, and that is how we will pay for 1 year of unemployment benefits.

What Senator MCCONNELL was suggesting was reintroducing into health insurance this discrimination against people with preexisting conditions for 300 million Americans as a way to pay for 3 months or 1 year of unemployment benefits. That is a terrible tradeoff.

I know how much the other side hates and loathes the Affordable Care Act. A Senator from Arkansas, Dale Bumpers, used a phrase often: They hate the Affordable Care Act like the devil hates holy water.

But the fact is to turn on 300 million Americans and to remove their protection under the Affordable Care Act against discrimination based on preexisting medical conditions to pay for unemployment benefits—what a Faustian bargain.

Is that the best the other side can come up with? It isn't.

The best they can come up with is to stand by these people, the less fortunate people among us struggling to find work and give them the basics of life, give them the necessities they need to get by. I am confident they will find a job, get back to work, and they will be taxpayers again someday. Let's stand by them, their spouses, and their children in this time of need.

That is what happened 50 years ago with President LBJ's State of the Union address. That is what should happen today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. As we begin a new year, the Senate returns with many significant challenges before us. One such challenge is the security of our citizens' private information.

Just before Christmas, news broke out that Target, a popular retail store in Nebraska and all across this Nation, had experienced an enormous data breach involving nearly 40 million debit and credit account numbers. That is nearly 1 in 10 Americans who had their sensitive personal information put in jeopardy.

Between November 27 and December 15, scammers silently stole massive amounts of consumer information from Target. The timing of this breach is significant, not only because it happened during the peak of the holiday shopping season, but also because this data is reportedly being sold on black markets around the world.

On December 20, Target announced: ''The information involved in this incident included customer name, credit or debit card number, and the card's expiration date and CVV.''

It was further determined on December 27 that encrypted PIN information, or encrypted personal identification numbers, associated with that data was also stolen.

This wasn't only an attack on Target, which has 14 stores in my home State of Nebraska, it was a crime against millions of hardworking citizens. Let me be clear. It is also much more than just a mere inconvenience for consumers.

Yes, such thefts complicate the daily routines of Americans, but it can also potentially damage their credit ratings, and it is an incredible tax on people's time. It also leaves many feeling vulnerable, including, unfortunately, the most vulnerable among us, the elderly.

As a Member of the Senate Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over this issue, I urge the chairman and our ranking member to begin looking into this matter further. Our Nation's entire data security system is in desperate need of revamping, and that is going to require congressional action.

What happened with that Target breach was not an isolated incident.

TJX Companies, which owns national retail chains TJ Maxx and Marshalls, was breached in 2007. Sony and Epsilon were also attacked in 2011.

We learned on New Year's Eve that the popular social communication platform Snapchat was also hacked, a breach of about 4.6 million user names with their corresponding phone numbers. These are only the latest examples, but we all know the problems run much, much deeper.

Identity theft has been the No. 1 consumer complaint at the Federal Trade Commission for the last 13 years in a row. The average financial loss for each instance of identity theft is $4,930, and it has been estimated that identity theft resulted in a $24.7 billion loss for our country in 2012.

Given these realities, we need to dedicate more time and energy to solutions that substantially improve the safety of our online activities. While the Target breach is important and deserves our attention, so too should the security risks posed by healthcare.gov, as well as the Federal and State insurance exchanges set up under ObamaCare.

Experian, a major U.S. credit reporting bureau, recently released its ''2014 Data Breach Industry Forecast,'' which states: ''The healthcare industry, by far, will be the most susceptible to publicly disclosed and widely scrutinized data breaches in 2014.''

As those who found out the hard way can tell us, healthcare.gov takes and holds a lot of sensitive information, including our social security numbers, names, and other information that can be transmitted. It has also been reported that hackers have attempted to break into the Web site at least 16 different times. Several experts say those numbers are very conservative estimates of known attempts.

Health and Human Services contractors also identified security vulnerabilities, which HHS ignored, before the site went public on October 1.

The protections and breach notifications standards for ObamaCare, which people were forced into, don't even meet the minimum standards put in place for the private sector. Every Nebraskan, and every American, has the right to know if their private information has been compromised because of ObamaCare.

Fortunately, data security appears to be an area where Republicans and Democrats can come together and do something positive for the American people.

We must take great care, however, not to make the problem worse. Smart policy results from an open, collaborative process, with input from businesses, consumers, and security experts. That is going to be the answer, not more red tape.

We should seek to streamline our data security laws to provide clarity and consistency. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the commerce committee to address these data breaches and to protect the integrity of Nebraskans' and Americans' personal information.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. While the distinguished Senator from Nebraska is still on the floor, I found much to agree with in her comments.

I hope that after we introduce the Personal Data Privacy and Security Act she may wish to become a cosponsor. This would better protect Americans from the growing threat of data breaches and identity theft.

Last year, according to Verizon's report, there were more than 600 publicly disclosed data breaches all over the country.

The recent breach of Target involved debit and credit card data of as many as 14 million customers. That is a reminder that developing a comprehensive national strategy to protect data privacy and cyber security remains one of the most challenging and important issues facing our Nation.

The Personal Data Privacy and Security Act will help meet this challenge, by better protecting Americans from the growing threat of data breaches and identity theft. I thank Senators FRANKEN, SCHUMER, and BLUMENTHAL for cosponsoring it.

When I first introduced this bill 9 years ago, I thought we very urgently needed privacy reforms for the American people. At that time, the threat to the American people was nowhere near as extensive as it is today.

The Judiciary Committee has favorably reported this bill in the past—Republicans and Democrats have joined together numerous times—but it has languished on the Senate calendar.

I wish to point out some of the dangers to Americans' privacy and our national security posed by data breaches that have not gone away. According to the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, more than 662 million records have been involved in data security breaches since 2005. In Verizon's ''2013 Data Breach Investigations Report,'' there were more than 600 publicly disclosed data breaches.

These are just the ones that are publicly disclosed.

The Personal Data Privacy and Security Act requires companies that have databases with sensitive personal information on Americans to establish and implement data privacy and security programs. The bill would also establish a single nationwide standard for data breach notification and require notice to consumers when their sensitive personal information has been compromised. It provides for tough criminal penalties for anyone who would intentionally and willfully conceal the fact that a data breach has occurred when the breach causes economic damage to consumers. The requirement for companies to publicly disclose a breach will also encourage them to implement far better security than many have today.

Protecting privacy rights is of critical importance to all of us, regardless of party or ideology. I hope all Senators will join with this.

RETIREMENT OF BARRY MEYER

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I would like to speak for a few minutes on a personal matter. It is about a dear friend of mine, Barry Meyer. I would like to recognize his remarkable career. He is retiring this month from Warner Brothers after 42 years with the company.

We know that Warner Brothers is one of America's most legendary entertainment companies. It is a household name for families around the Nation. I think of the times I have walked through the company's grounds with Barry Meyer. We would talk about his coming there as a young lawyer and about the history of the company that he eventually came to lead. He showed an impressive sense of history, and it is gratifying to see somebody who takes such pride in his work.

We have all heard of Warner Brothers, but far fewer Americans have heard about the man behind the magic for the past 14 years. It is a testament to his leadership as chairman and CEO that he allowed the company and its properties to shine in the spotlight.

Despite his quiet style, Barry stood at the forefront of pop culture during his tenure at Warner Brothers. Think of movies and television shows such as ''Harry Potter,'' ''The Big Bang Theory,'' ''The Blind Side,'' and ''The Dark Knight'' trilogy. They made people laugh, cry, or simply marvel at the memorable productions that have sprung from his tenure at this company.

I would also note as a lifelong Batman fan that I have had the opportunity to see two of Barry's productions from the inside while they were filming. I can speak firsthand to the culture he fostered at Warner Brothers that brought people together and allowed creativity to flourish.

Barry first joined Warner Brothers in 1971—before I was in the Senate, I might add—as director of business affairs for the television division. In 1999 he became chairman and CEO. His steady leadership of the company came at a time when the entertainment industry was beginning to face new challenges. The industry was facing the rise of the Internet as well as the tremendous challenge of online piracy. Barry pushed the company to innovate, but he also became an important voice about the impact online piracy has on our economy and on industries that are a vibrant part of American life. His counsel has been invaluable to me as Congress has looked for solutions to address this issue. He has always been available to give advice—solid advice based on knowledge, not on emotion.

Warner Brothers has been one of the world's most successful entertainment companies under Barry's tenure, but he has also focused on humanitarian and charitable pursuits. He is a member of the board of directors for Human Rights Watch and the advisory board of the National Museum of American History here at the Smithsonian.

He was also recognized in 2006 with the American Jewish Committee's Dorothy and Sherrill C. Corwin Human Relations Award for his humanitarian efforts. I know that when he was given that award, his request was that the speakers not praise him but instead praise things of importance to all Americans. This is typical of Barry Meyer as a person.

Among these efforts was joining with his wife Wendy to establish scholarships at the University of Southern California to support students who have been in foster care. Barry and Wendy have wonderful children and grandchildren. They have a loving family with them. Visitors to their home find that it is a welcoming place that feels lived in, a place where children and grandchildren can feel comfortable and play. Barry and Wendy are fortunate to have that family. What they have done is they have worked to help those who have not necessarily had that advantage.

My wife Marcelle and I have gotten to know Barry and Wendy. They have been together with us in Vermont, here in Washington, and out in California. Some people who have the position he does might make sure everybody knows that they are important—not so with either one of them. They are down-to-earth and quiet. When we get together, we pick up the conversation we had months before. They make you feel as if you are a member of the family.

So this remarkable couple is going to be working in other endeavors.

There have been some great articles about Barry, as he looks back on his career and the work he has done to make sure the company remains in good hands with his successor. As he begins this next chapter of his life, I wish Barry all the best. I congratulate him on a wonderful and distinguished career. Warner Brothers and the entertainment industry are not going to be quite the same without him, but he leaves behind a legacy, an example for the next generation to follow. I know his successor, and I wish Kevin Tsujihara the very best in following him.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a December 29, 2013, article from The Wrap, which my daughter Alicia showed me.

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

[From TheWrap, Dec. 29, 2013]

BARRY MEYER ENDS 42-YEAR TENURE AT WARNER BROS.—A MODEST MOGUL WHO SHUNNED THE SPOTLIGHT

(By Brent Lang and Lucas Shaw)

This year was Meyer's last at Warner Bros. after more than four decades at the studio.

One of the most low-key moguls in Hollywood, Barry Meyer will slip from the stage this January, when he relinquishes his title as chairman of Warner Bros.

But Meyer's 42-year tenure at the studio—a remarkable record in its own right, including 14 years at the helm—is notable for being one of the most effective in the studio's history.

Under his stewardship, Warner Bros. has consistently ranked among the industry leaders in box office, syndication sales and television ratings, launching franchises like ''Harry Potter,'' driving the international success of shows like ''Two and a Half Men'' all while managing the company during a rocky corporate merger with AOL, the rise of digital piracy and the steep decline of home entertainment.

And yet, Meyer, 69, is someone you rarely saw quoted in the media or taking victory laps with stars of the big or small screen—he generally left that to others.

Meyer gave up the CEO title to Kevin Tsujihara last March, but has remained as chairman to ease the transition. Next month, Tsujihara will succeed Meyer in that title as well.

Typical of Meyer's effectiveness behind-the-scenes came when the studios were trying to convince Chris Dodd, the former U.S. senator from Connecticut, to take the job as the movie industry's top lobbyist.

Meyer and Walt Disney Company Chairman Bob Iger took Dodd to dinner and suggested his reservations about becoming the Motion Picture Association of America's new chairman and CEO were unwarranted.

''He said 'Be a leader,' and that sounds like a simple enough thing to say—but that's what he was at Warner Bros.,'' Dodd told TheWrap. ''He was not a grandstander at all and he does not seek the spotlight. He was not worried if his name was in the press.''

Dodd also recalled that at a screening of ''Argo'' by the Motion Picture Association of America, Meyer stood in the back of the room as the audience applauded director Ben Affleck and the real life CIA agent Tony Mendez, whose heroism inspired the hit film. He waved off Dodd's attempts to take the stage and share in the adulation.

''That was a quintessential moment and that's why he got listened to every time he talked,'' Dodd said. ''People knew he never had agenda.''

Even Meyer's rivals agree that the mogul's style was one of unusual discretion (he declined to be interviewed for this piece). ''He never looked for recognition,'' Ron Meyer, vice chairman of NBCUniversal, told TheWrap (no relation). ''He never looked to have his name out there.''

Meyer's accomplishments came at a time when the entertainment industry was beset by tectonic changes in how people consume, distribute and pay for entertainment.

''He was a source of stability in a choppy sea,'' Hal Vogel, CEO of Vogel Capital Management, told TheWrap.

Warren Lieberfarb, the former head of home video at the studio, recalled that shortly after Meyer assumed his leadership role, Time Warner's rank and file became dismayed that the merger with AOL had sent the company's share price plummeting.

''There was a lot of discontent and agitation in the organization,'' Lieberfarb recalled. ''Barry brought stability to the company and boosted morale at a critical juncture in the post-AOL period and throughout the decade.''

Bob Daly, Meyer's predecessor as chairman, said his one hesitation in recommending him for the job was that he lacked experience on the film side of the business, but noted that his reservations were ultimately unfounded.

''He was a terrific executive and a good negotiator, but he wasn't a movie guy,'' Daly said. ''What he did do was hire great people and put them in a position to succeed.''

Meyer's partnership with Alan Horn, who oversaw the movie side of Warner Bros., and later with Horn's successor Jeff Robinov, yielded a string of hits such as the ''Harry Potter'' and ''The Dark Knight'' franchises and critical and commercial successes such as ''Argo,'' ''Mystic River'' and ''The Blind Side.''

''The biggest part of his management style was in his selection of people he would have run his divisions,'' Charles Roven, producer of ''Man of Steel'' and ''The Dark Knight Rises,'' told TheWrap. ''He had the ability to pick excellent people and to trust that they were doing a good job.''

Under Meyer, the television side of the business produced a stream of hits such as ''The Big Bang Theory'' and ''Two and a Half Men'' that made it an even bigger source of profits than the film business. Warner Bros. remains one of the most prodigious producers of television series in the world.

Meyer also was instrumental in turning the CW into a destination for younger female viewers with shows such as ''The Vampire Diaries'' and ''Gossip Girl.''

''In the syndication arena they've had great success and they've been able to establish some first rate shows,'' Bill Carroll, a television industry analyst for Katz Media Group, said. ''They have a diverse lineup and they have had success each season in introducing new shows.''

Facing a challenge from digital disrupters, under Meyer's tenure the studio pushed back against Netflix by limiting its access to new releases, while also signing deals with the streaming giants such as Amazon, that licensed television programs and other content. Warner Bros. has also been a key booster of UltraViolet, the studio backed cloud service that has helped bolster digital sales of films.

''Barry saw what was happening in the world,'' Les Moonves, chairman and CEO of CBS Corp., told TheWrap. ''And he encouraged his executives to experiment and figure things out.''

Not surprisingly, Tsujihara, the winner of a year-long executive bake-off that ultimately led to the departures of Robinov and TV chief Bruce Rosenblum, comes from the world of online distribution. Now he faces the challenge of maintaining Warners' success in the face of myriad technological and social challenges.

''Kevin is a really terrific guy,'' Daly said. ''He knows so much about the technology

and he's a good administrator. When you look at Warner Bros.' 90 years, it's an unusual company in that there's been a remarkable continuity of management . . . Kevin is the right man at this time to run this company, but the challenges that he faces will be completely different now than when I ran it or Barry ran it.''

''Barry continued the Warner Bros. tradition—you always groom your replacement,'' Daly added.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I know I look forward to the next time Marcelle and I have an opportunity to be with Barry and Wendy, and while he may be retired, neither one of them is going to be sitting back doing nothing. I know them too well for that.

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

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

Mr. COONS. Madam President, 50 years ago today President Lyndon Johnson challenged a joint session of Congress and the American people to begin a war on poverty. ''Unfortunately,'' President Johnson said, ''many Americans today live on the outskirts of hope. Our task is to replace their despair with opportunity.''

Since President Johnson first issued that call, Congress and our Nation have taken important steps to build and sustain a circle of protection around the most vulnerable in our society. That protection is not as complete or as strong as it can or should be, but through programs such as unemployment insurance—which we are considering this week in this Congress—we are more able to catch our neighbors when they fall and support them as they work to get back to their feet.

Earlier this week this Senate began debate on whether to extend emergency unemployment insurance for the 3,600 Delawareans and more than 1 million American job seekers whose benefits just expired. It is absolutely critical that we approve this extension.

During this fragile but sustained economic recovery, unemployment insurance has been a critical lifeline, one that has prevented millions of unemployed Americans from slipping further, falling into poverty. In 2012, unemployment insurance kept 2.5 million Americans, including 600,000 children, out of poverty. That means without Federal action to extend unemployment insurance, the Nation's poverty rate would have been doubled what it was. These numbers are for 2012, not the height of the recession.

So let's be clear about what we are debating when we discuss an unemployment insurance extension. These are long-term benefits for jobless Americans who have been out of work through no fault of their own for more than 26 weeks. When I say through no fault of their own, I mean it. People cannot get benefits if they are fired for cause. As they receive unemployment insurance benefits, they must diligently search for another job. So when we talk about the millions of long-term unemployed Americans, we are talking about folks who were laid off because of the recession, are fighting to get back on their feet, and rely on those benefits to keep their families afloat, to keep a roof over their head, food on the table, their families together, and sustain them as they continue looking for work.

Yet 2 weeks ago, funding for long-term emergency unemployment insurance benefits ran out. That meant $300 less weekly income for the average job seeker and that meant $400 million left our economy in just the first week.

In Delaware it pulled $877,000 out of our economy. That is money that otherwise would be spent in local grocery stores and our markets.

One of the most vexing comments I have heard in the debate over whether to continue these benefits is that they somehow incentivize people to not bother looking for jobs, to not be serious; they instead lull able-bodied Americans into lives of dependency. Given the people I know in Delaware, that is not just absurd, it is, forgive me, offensive. As President Obama said yesterday, it sells the American people short.

I have met a lot of people in my years of public service. I have heard from and spoken with Delawareans up and down my State who are relying on unemployment benefits that they paid into when employed. Every one of them would trade a job for not relying on unemployment insurance in a heartbeat. Let me share a few stories of Delawareans who have contacted me and shared how hard this has been for them.

Debbie from Middleton, DE, wrote to me that while she is receiving unemployment benefits, she has applied to 156 jobs. She has been interviewed three times. She is 56. She has worked diligently since she was a teenager. She has worked hard. She paid her taxes. She paid into this unemployment insurance system practically her whole life. Yet now when she needs it most, we fail to continue to provide this lifeline of support.

Linda from Newark wrote to me that on just $258 a week her family has been barely able to stay afloat. They are doing everything they can to keep up on their bills, to stay current, but even with unemployment insurance they have had to sell some of their family's treasured possessions and goods. She wrote to me:

This is no way for anyone to live. It's disheartening and it is difficult to stay motivated to keep searching.

Frankly, she said:

I am thoroughly fed up with being categorized as someone who lives off the Government by collecting unemployment benefits.

I agree with her because, frankly, Linda, you paid into these benefits for years. This is what it is there for.

John from Frederica told me he was laid off from the Dover Air Force Base in part because of the sequester and now depends on unemployment benefits while he continues diligently searching for another job. This is a man who is a Navy veteran, was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Yet right now, because of the partisan gridlock in this Congress, we are not there for him and his family.

The millions of Americans such as Debbie, Linda, and John in Delaware face a very tough job market. Nationally, for every available job there are three job seekers. The longer someone remains unemployed, the harder it becomes for them to find work. The more their skills are out of date, the more difficult the search becomes and the more they need our support to sustain that job search.

I have seen these effects up close and personal in Delaware. In my 3 years as a Senator I have hosted 16 different job fairs to connect Delawareans looking for work with employers looking to hire, and I have been honored to partner with Senator CARPER and Congressman CARNEY in hosting these job fairs. In fact, we are hosting another one in Dover, DE, in just a few weeks.

When you listen to unemployed Delawareans and listen to them talk about their struggle, about how hard it is to keep making ends meet and get a job, you get a sense of how important these jobs are for their survival as families and you get a sense of how much more we can and should be doing to tackle long-term unemployment in America.

As poverty of opportunity and hope afflicts too many of our communities and darkens the lives of too many of our neighbors, let us not suffer in this Chamber from a poverty of imagination, determination, and ambition. On this issue, which is so fundamental to who we are as a nation and to our service to this body, we cannot give in to complacency and apathy. Fighting poverty is hard, and adapting our economy to the realities of a new era is a challenge we have struggled with for more than a generation. It is hard finding out how to realize an economy with growth that is both strong and more equitable, one that is dynamic and creative and competitive and also has a broad middle class, provides security for working families and leaves no one behind, an economy that invests in the dreams and aspirations of every child, but building that economy is surely one of the most urgent and difficult challenges we face. Doing so requires that we put aside our personal politics and ideologies and come together in areas where, until recently, there has been a broad and bipartisan consensus.

I now hear some of my Republican colleagues talk on this floor about the war on poverty, 50 years later, as having been an abject failure. They make sweeping indictments on government

action, putting small government ideology ahead of the shared national goal of fighting poverty. But this perspective misses the point. The original war on poverty was made up of a lot of programs, energetic initiatives that worked at every level of government, some that failed but many others that through steady and determined bipartisan work and steady improvement and refinement over the years have become critical, central, and widely valued strands that hold together our social safety net. Medicare, Medicaid, Head Start, food stamps, unemployment insurance, all of these programs are valued and hold American families together and sustain American job seekers. Bipartisan leaders across the decades have reaffirmed the importance and value of these programs time and time again. These programs, let's remember, are about so much more than lifting people out of poverty. They are about keeping people out of poverty in the first place. We need them to build and strengthen the American middle class, which is one of the greatest legacies of this Nation.

As we search for ways to adapt our fight to new times and new challenges, there is no one way to win the war on poverty President Johnson declared 50 years ago. It is not a question of big or small government, Federal or local action. As President Johnson himself said:

> It will not be a short or easy struggle. No single weapon or strategy will suffice. . . . Poverty is a national problem. . . . But this attack, to be effective, must be organized at the State and local level. . . . For the war on poverty will not be won here in Washington. It must be won in the field, in every private home, in every public office, from the courthouse to the White House.

This was not an ideological call for big, centralized government. It was an all-hands-on-deck call, a moral call, for our Nation to meet a national challenge. Although we have made progress since he first addressed this Congress in 1964, his call to combat poverty remains just as important today, even as our challenges have evolved.

We have come a long way since the depths of our own great recession just a few years ago. More than 8 million private sector jobs have been created. There has been more than a three-point drop in the national unemployment rate. We have resurgent energy, housing, agricultural, and manufacturing sectors. Although a few years have passed since our economy sunk to its lowest lows, this crisis remains for those Americans and their families who are still struggling to find a job either for their families' food or to keep a roof over their heads.

This week, while we are debating extending emergency unemployment insurance, we should note this is not only obvious and necessary to do, it is the beginning of our real work of sustaining the war on poverty.

I am proud to be engaged in bipartisan efforts to strengthen the middle class, to focus on jobs and skills and manufacturing. We have to find bipartisan solutions that engage the private and public sectors, Federal and local governments, in putting our people back to work. While we do that, we cannot forget to continue to insist on a circle of protection around the most vulnerable in our society rather than allowing that valued circle to crumble. We have to remember we are all in this together, that ''there but for the grace of God go I,'' as we see those in our community, in our families who are struggling in this recovery.

We know that today it may be our neighbors, tomorrow it may be us. President Johnson called on us to focus on the best of America, the spirit that we hold each other up, the spirit that builds community through mutual sacrifice. As we begin our work in this new year to jump-start our economy and spread hope and opportunity, we must never forget that basic spirit which President Johnson called forth and which has kept this country moving from generation to generation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I rise to speak on actually two topics; one on extending the unemployment benefit program that is so essential to the people of Maryland and to other fellow Americans and also to comment on the National Security Agency surveillance programs, the need for reform of the program but the need not to reject the mission of the agency and cast a disparaging light on the men and women who work there.

Let me start first though talking about unemployment benefits. I come with a great sense of urgency and passion that we need to extend these unemployment benefits that expired January 1. This is one of the coldest spells we have had in decades in the Northeast-Midwest area. I find it unfathomable, when it is so cold, that the big chill in Washington is that we are not going to extend the unemployment benefits, extending a warm helping hand to Americans who have lost their job through no fault of their own and have been unemployed for more than 6 months.

Where are our national priorities? If we cannot help one another, be a bridge to get to a job, then what is our government all about? We spend billions overseas—and I support that. We spend billions on tax breaks to send jobs overseas. I do not support that. I want to make sure that for the men and women who do not have a job today but are looking for one every day, that we help them out.

Senator COONS, the Senator from Delaware, just spoke and said today it could be your neighbor, tomorrow it could be you. I think we are going to be unemployed unless we start focusing on how to help the middle class. The middle class is shrinking and unemployment is staggering. We have to lower the unemployment rate, although I want to make sure that during this time while we look at how to create jobs, we continue to provide a social insurance program that helps people when they are laid off through no fault of their own.

My own home State of Maryland is right this very minute affected by 23,000 people—that is 23,000 families—who have now lost a modest benefit which averages out to about $313 per week. That enables people, while they are looking for work, to be able to pay for their housing, pay for their food, and pay for their heat.

There are those who are implying that if we provide unemployment compensation or assistance we are going to encourage sloth, laziness, laggardness; that they are going to kind of lounge around not looking for work.

Let me tell the story about Western Maryland. This is not BARBARA MIKULSKI; this is reported in the Baltimore Sun and in the Washington Post. We have a community called Washington County. The unemployment rate is 7.3 percent. Just a few years ago they had a Good Humor plant. They made ice cream. I visited that ice cream plant. Everybody was happy, and they were busy producing Good Humor, which was sold all over this country. Well, 2 years ago it closed, and 400 good-paying jobs left Hagerstown. That is the bad news.

The good news is a co-op dairy farmer came in, purchased it, and is now producing milk and ice cream but in smaller amounts. Guess what. They received 1,600 job applications for 36 job openings. They had 36 job openings, and 1,600 people in that small rural county applied for those jobs. There were 44 people for every job available.

Hagerstown has a great sense of patriotism. They sent many men and women to fight and die in the two wars we just fought. They have a great work ethic. They need an opportunity to have jobs. Don't tell those people in Hagerstown or in Salisbury or in Baltimore or throughout my State that they are too lazy. Maybe we are lazy; maybe we don't get the job done.

One of the quickest ways to jump-start the economy, if we want to, is to pay unemployment compensation. All the data shows that unemployment insurance adds about $1.60 back into the economy.

I want to create a sense of urgency. I say to my friends on the other side of the aisle: Over a decade ago, you had a man run for the President of the United States who won. His name is George W. Bush. He campaigned on something that I thought was so interesting. I looked forward to actually hearing more about something he called a compassionate conservative. We understand that people are conservative. We understand that people are fiscally conservative, but the message was that we can be compassionate conservatives.

I say to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle: Remember the compassionate conservative message from

a decade ago, and remember that man's father said we need the points of light to light up America. I say, let's be a point of light here. Let's add a beacon of hope to the unemployed so we can help them. Don't be critical of those who can't find work.

Let's look at how we can have a job strategy. Let's get our infrastructure back so we can create jobs in the construction industry. Let's eliminate the tax breaks that send jobs overseas and bring the jobs back home. Let's do the tax extenders so we can get people working again. Let's put people back to work.

Pass unemployment compensation. Let's pass some job creation bills. Let's get America working again, and in order to do that, we need to get to work and pass the unemployment compensation bill.

NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY

I want to also comment on something else, and that is the NSA, the National Security Agency, which I am very familiar with as a member of the Intelligence Committee, and it is also located in my State. I know the men and women who work there, and I know the mission they provide. I also know that a few months ago a man by the name of Edward Snowden lit up the airwaves with his illegal barrage of revelations about the role of surveillance that the National Security Agency played. Mr. Snowden provided a titillating, mesmerizing inside view of the United States. Whether he was a whistleblower or a traitor, I will leave that for another discussion.

Right now we know about NSA surveillance, and it sparked a lot of debate. I think that is good. I think that is healthy.

I come to the floor today, first of all, to thank President Obama for establishing a commission to look at this and make recommendations. My view is that we ought to review the recommendations of the Presidential commission. We need to make reform where reform is necessary, but let's not reject the mission of the National Security Agency that has protected us for decades and decades. Let us not reject the men and women who work there every single day, standing sentry to protect us against attacks, whether it is a terrorist attack or a cyber security attack.

Yes, we need to protect the civil liberties of the United States of America and honor our Constitution. As a member of the Intelligence Committee, and as part of my principles, I have always said: Before we ask NSA agents—or any member of any intelligence agency—to do anything, we should ask: Is it constitutional? Is it legal? Is it authorized? Is it necessary? Remember the criteria. I recommend that this be the grid of the prism we look at: Constitutional, absolutely; legal, a necessity; and authorize. NSA doesn't do it on its own. The authorization comes from the President and his intelligence apparatus. And last but not at all least, is it necessary to protect people?

I think we need to really work on this. President Obama established a review commission. I think it is great, and I think Congress should review it. I know appropriate hearings are already looking into that.

At the same time, we should practice reform. I am absolutely on the side of reform. I have joined with my colleagues in supporting reform for these programs. For years I led the fight on the accountability of leadership. Back in 2007, I wanted the head of the National Security Agency confirmed by the Senate. I was stiff-armed by the Congress. I was held back by the Armed Services Committee. We had to deal with the turf wars at the Pentagon: Don't meddle with our generals. Well, I wasn't meddling with the generals. I just think the head of the National Security Agency should be there. So let's get off of the turf wars and fight terrorist wars. Let's restore confidence in the National Security Agency and have its head confirmed by the Senate. I am a great admirer of General Alexander.

The committee also recommends that the next head of NSA be a civilian. I think we ought to look at that. I think we ought to examine that and see what is in the best interests of the mission of the agency and what we need to be able to do. But whoever is the head of the National Security Agency, be they civilian or military, I think they ought to be confirmed by the Senate.

I also joined across the aisle with my great colleague Senator COATS of Indiana to ask that the NSA inspector general also be confirmed by the Senate to make sure that we have a confirmable position so there is a bona fide whistleblower route with a confirmable inspector general to make sure that NSA is doing the right thing and whistleblowers have an avenue to do it.

I also supported transparency to make sure that those NSA programs are accountable and as transparent as they can be. That doesn't mean we reveal the secrets of the United States. Joining with Senators WYDEN, UDALL, and HEINRICH, I have introduced an amendment to make the secret FISA court opinions were publicly available under certain circumstances.

I also worked with Senators KING, WARNER, and COLLINS to bring greater transparency to the FISA court through amicus curiae, or friend of the court, to assist in the consideration of novel interpretations of the law. There are those who say, in the President's report, that there should be a civil liberties council and a red team that can go in there. Let's talk about that. Let's debate it. Let's make sure there is more than one opinion before the court on its legality. I support those suggestions.

Let's look at the constitutionality. One judge recently said the NSA surveillance program, particularly under something called section 215, was shocking, and he said it was not constitutional, but 36 other FISA court opinions by 15 judges said it was constitutional.

I am a social worker. I am not a constitutional lawyer. Do you know who decides on what is constitutional? The Supreme Court of the United States. I think that Congress ought to call for—or the executive branch and the President—an expedited review of these programs. I would like to settle, once and for all, whether the programs and laws passed by the Congress in the area of surveillance—I would like to know if they are constitutional. If they are, then we know that. If they are not, then that ends the program. We will follow the law, and we will obey the Constitution of the United States.

Let's get to work here. Let's go to work here. Let's make sure that we are bringing about reform.

I want to talk about the mission of the agency. The National Security Agency is not a puzzle palace, and it is not some sneaky surveillance agency with people in tan raincoats and fedoras, hiding behind doors and spying on people. In fact, remember what they think they do—they think what they do is constitutional, legal, authorized, and necessary.

We need the National Security Agency. There is only one thing the 215 program does: It protects us against counterterrorism. They are there to protect us against counterespionage. They are there to protect us and make sure that weapons of mass destruction are contained. They are advocates for nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction in cooperation with the CIA and NRO.

They also protect us in the area of cyber security. Those 80 million people who recently had their credit cards stolen at Target—we don't know if that was a job that was done in the United States of America. For all we know, it was organized cyber crime coming out of Albania or another Eastern European country with shoddy rules and regulations. We don't know. However, we do know the FBI and the NSA are working on it, as well as others. NSA's job is to look at what is over there. Some of our biggest bank heists in organized cyber crime are coming from over there. Did you know that one of the biggest thefts out of the Medicare Program was done by a cyber heist by organized crime out of Albania? Can you believe that? It was caught. In working with the inspector general at CMS, the FBI, and the NSA, we caught them, got our money back, and now we are back on track. So they do a good job, and we are kind of losing sight as far as these concerns about surveillance.

There is no doubt that we protect the civil liberties of the United States of America. We do believe in privacy. I am not going to describe the program or go into it, but I will tell you what really bothers me. What really bothers me is that somehow or another, through the media, and even conversations in this body, we are painting NSA

as if it were a bad, villainous, duplicitous, surreptitious agency. That could not be further from the truth. Somehow or another, the men and women who work there every single day, standing sentry on behalf of the United States of America on signals intelligence, are somehow or another to feel that something is wrong. The morale at that Agency is terrible. The morale at that Agency is falling. The morale at that Agency is not in a healthy situation.

We have to do something about that by showing respect for the men and women who work there. Most of them are civilians. They are some of the brightest people in the world. Did my colleagues know that the NSA is the largest employer of mathematicians in the world because of the code breakers, the cryptologists? They break codes. Who uses codes? It is not Mother Teresa.

Respect. Let's have respect because they are hard at work. While the rest of us were home for Christmas enjoying turkey or home for Thanksgiving, they were out there working. They were making sure there wasn't another Underwear Bomber. When our defenses appear to be lowest—when people are traveling on airplanes, when people are in the holiday spirit—they are working. They are working right now to make sure our Olympic athletes are safe, working with appropriate international law enforcement. They are at it every single day. Can't we give them respect while we sort out constitutionality and legality? Let's sort it out, but let's stop the finger-pointing.

I must tell my colleagues that I was taken aback today when I got my National Journal Daily and read where it says ''Obama Invites NSA Top Congressional Critics To Meet.'' I think it is always great when the President speaks with Congress, but he invited the critics of the program to the White House. I think that is good. I would prefer, though, to read—instead of ''inviting the critics,'' the phrase would have said ''reformers.'' Put me in the ''reformer'' category. If there are abuses, I am one of the first to criticize them. I have been part of reform. I intend to be part of reform, but I don't intend to be a part of rejecting the mission, and I don't intend to be a part of any effort that downgrades or downplays the contribution of the men and women who work there. So call the people reformers.

I hope the White House and this Congress will signal to the men and women at the National Security Agency that they are respected, that they are valued; as we pursue reform, we will always do our duty to ensure that what they do is constitutional, legal, authorized, and necessary. But don't blame them for the job we asked them to do. I think if we proceed with a spirit of reform rather than blame, we will be able to accomplish a great deal.

This is a big day in the Senate. Let's pass unemployment compensation. Let's do the reforms we need, and let's do a good job, as we are supposed to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I come to the floor this afternoon to talk about the fact that 50 years ago today President Lyndon Johnson made his first State of the Union Address. He used that date—January 8, 1964—to chart a new agenda for the country and to declare that America would take on an unconditional war on poverty. With that directive, Congress worked on some of the most successful programs in the history of our country: Medicare, Head Start, Pell grants, and expansions to Social Security. President Johnson knew that the devastation of poverty went deeper than just the lack of a job or the lack of basic needs. Americans in poverty didn't even have a fair chance to make a better life for themselves and their families.

Now, since 1964, economists estimate the poverty rate has now fallen by 10 percent when accounting for social safety net programs. So we are moving in the right direction, but we have a lot more work to do to give everyone the fair chance they need to succeed in this country.

For too many people today, the war on poverty is a daily battle just to make ends meet. More than 46 million people in our country live in poverty—46 million people. That is according to the Census Bureau. More than 20 percent—that is one in five of our kids in this country—live in poverty. So to win this fight, we need to strengthen the programs that support those in need.

Without question, one of the reasons we have seen a decline in poverty is because of the programs that provide a safety net for our most vulnerable Americans. In 1964 Congress created the food stamp program for those struggling to feed their families. Today it is known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or better known as SNAP. In 2012 alone the program lifted 4.9 million people out of poverty, according to the Center on the Budget and Policy Priorities.

We have also worked to make sure preschoolers from low-income areas have the building blocks they need to start kindergarten ready to learn. Since the mid-1960s Head Start has provided early childhood learning and health services to more than 30 million children and their families.

That is the kind of progress we have to continue. Those programs and many like them have provided economic security and opportunity to millions across the country.

Yet even with the successes we have had in fighting hunger and ending unemployment, there are those today here in Congress who want to slash the very assistance that gives so many Americans today an opportunity to make better lives for themselves and their families.

We can't waver in the fight to give all Americans a fair chance—a fair chance to get ahead. We have to expand opportunities for young learners by investing in universal pre-K. We have to ensure that workers can earn enough to put food on the table by raising the minimum wage. We have to keep fighting, and we have to win the war on poverty.

I know personally how vital these programs are. When I was just 15 years old, my dad, who fought in World War II and was a veteran, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Within just a few years he couldn't work anymore. My mom found a job. She stayed home to raise seven kids. The job she found wasn't enough to support seven kids, and my dad had a growing stack of medical bills. All of a sudden, my family, without any warning, had fallen on hard times.

This country at that time didn't turn its back on us. For several months my family relied on food stamps. It wasn't much, but it helped us get by. With the help of a government program—a government program—my mom was fortunate to attend Lake Washington Vocational Technical School and got the training she needed to get a better job so she could support her family. My older brother, my twin sister, and I were able to stay in college because of student loans and support from what we now call Pell grants—all from this government.

Even through those hard times, none of us lost hope. With a lot of hard work—and we had help from our government—we were able to get to where we are today. That is why I believe so strongly that here in Congress today, we have to expand that hope I had as a young girl to many more families and Americans who are struggling today.

Fifty years ago President Johnson recognized that poverty is a national problem, and that is why he made it a national priority. So I think we ought to rededicate ourselves today to that national priority. Let's work together here to support the men and women across the country who hope for their chance at the American dream. Let's not just commemorate this anniversary; let's begin to use and have a renewed energy to winning the war on poverty in our country once and for all.

Thank you, Madam President.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

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

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

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, 50 years ago today President Johnson declared a war on poverty. He said:

> Very often a lack of jobs and money is not the cause of poverty, but the symptom. The

cause may lie deeper in our failure to give citizens a fair chance to develop their own capacities, in a lack of education and training, in a lack of medical care and housing.

He proposed a broad range of new initiatives to address these deeper failures: Medicare, Head Start, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Higher Education Act, and housing and transportation programs. These initiatives have given millions of people more opportunities to succeed and help them get back on their feet when they stumble. President Johnson called on Congress to take up these proposals because, he said, ''many Americans live on the outskirts of hope. Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity.'' That is still our task today.

We have come a long way since 1964, but clearly the fight is not over. For years our American dream has been that if people work hard and play by the rules, they will succeed. However, the divide between the very rich and the very poor is as wide as it has ever been. Wages have stagnated, and more and more middle-class families struggle to get ahead and provide opportunities for their children.

We have to carry on the work that began 50 years ago and update it for the needs of our modern economy. Let's keep fighting to create new, good-paying jobs and sustainable American industries. Let's make sure all Americans have access to the education and training needed to get those jobs and succeed. Let's work to make sure that as our economy grows, so do middle-class incomes and the opportunity to climb into the middle class and beyond.

I wish to speak briefly about three ideas for these goals. First, let's increase the minimum wage so workers earn more than poverty-level wages. Second, let's make education more accessible from pre-K through college so that Americans are well prepared for the jobs of the future. Finally, let's strengthen the safety net programs that have kept so many out of poverty so working families can get through the tough times and get back on their feet.

First, our economy has grown fourfold over the last 50 years, but the poor and middle class have not seen enough of the benefits of this growth. According to Census data, the economy is producing 45 percent more per person than it was in 1987, but real median income has remained flat.

Workers earning minimum wage have fared even worse because today's Federal minimum wage has not kept up with inflation. The 1968 minimum wage, adjusted for inflation, would be $10.68 today, not $7.25. That means the minimum wage has lost one-third of its buying power. It is no wonder our families are struggling. The minimum wage should be increased.

Raising the minimum wage is important for many Americans, but it is particularly important for women. Most minimum wage workers—over 64 percent of them—are women. Today millions of women are trapped in minimum wage jobs.

The Federal minimum wage of $7.25 yields only $15,000 per year for a full-time worker. If this woman is supporting a child or an elderly parent, as is often the case, their family income would be below the Federal poverty line. Their situation is even more dire in Hawaii, where the cost of living is much higher.

Fighting poverty is a women's issue. Poverty hurts more women and children than men. More than 58 percent of adults in poverty are women. More than one in seven women—nearly 17.8 million—live in poverty. More than one in five children—about 21.8 percent—are poor, almost twice the rate for adult men.

The low minimum wage hurts not only workers—and particularly women workers and children—it is unfair to taxpayers. That is because minimum wage workers are often eligible for food assistance, housing vouchers, and other safety-net programs. This means we taxpayers are subsidizing companies that pay their workers poverty wages. If we want to reduce government spending—and make more workers fully self-sufficient—raising the minimum wage is a good place to start.

Second, expanding access to education—from birth to college and career training—will build new ladders out of poverty.

When I came to this country as an 8-year-old immigrant, my mother enrolled me in Hawaii public schools. That is where I learned English and developed a love of reading. When I graduated from Kaimuki High School, I attended the University of Hawaii. The Higher Education Act of 1965 helped me—and millions of other students—pay for college through work-study and low-interest Federal student loans. Today we need to strengthen our commitment to our next generation of scientists, architects, teachers, and innovators.

I know firsthand the power of a quality education. That is why for years I have been fighting for quality preschool in Hawaii and nationwide. Children in poverty come to kindergarten with half the vocabulary of their higher-income peers. If they start school already behind, how can we expect them to catch up?

President Johnson helped pass the Head Start Act. This law helped millions of poor children attend preschool, while parents got the skills they needed to help their kids at home. Since then, we have reformed and strengthened Head Start quality, but, still, fewer than half of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds can get a Head Start seat. Fewer than 1 in 20 eligible infants and toddlers can get a spot in Early Head Start.

The Federal Government cannot do it all. States and local governments want to do their part too. That is why Governors, educators, and legislators across the country—both Republicans and Democrats—have expanded State preschool in 2013. Let's support their efforts.

This Congress I worked with Senators HARKIN, MURRAY, CASEY, and others to introduce the Strong Start for America's Children Act. This bill would create a Federal-State partnership for high-quality preschool. It includes elements from our PRE-K Act so States such as Hawaii that have further to go can have more support as they build their preschool system.

The bill's supporters include parents, educators, business leaders, and even police. They recognize that we can pay for quality preschool now or pay later for law enforcement when kids drop out of school and commit crimes. Let's come together to get this done.

While we need to focus on helping kids start kindergarten ready to succeed, we also need to improve access to higher education when they graduate from high school.

With student debt skyrocketing, the Pell grant is a bedrock investment in college access. In 1978, the Pell grant helped pay for 75 percent of college costs at a 4-year public university. Today it pays for only a third.

This year I plan to introduce the Pell Grant Protection Act, a bill to strengthen and preserve the Pell grant. There is also more we can do—like simplifying the Federal student aid process, improving work-study, and expanding access to adult basic education. I look forward to working on these and other efforts in the Higher Education Act and Workforce Investment Act this year.

Third, let's strengthen our safety net programs, including Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, unemployment insurance, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP.

These programs provide real hope and real opportunity for people. I know this because I have lived it. My mother raised three children by herself. Most of us have relied upon or known families who have relied upon food stamps or unemployment insurance. My mother's unemployment checks were a safety net for us, providing us with much needed temporary help. They gave us breathing room and put food on the table while she searched for work. I know the anxiety when the family breadwinner loses her job through no fault of her own.

These safety net programs have helped keep millions of Americans out of poverty. Using the Census Supplemental Poverty Measure, the national poverty rate has gone down from 26 percent in 1967 to 16 percent in 2012. Without safety-net programs, the poverty rate would have climbed to 29 percent. Seniors would have been hurt especially badly.

Thus, it is alarming to see many of my Republican colleagues calling to shred the safety net programs. They have proposed drastic cuts to SNAP, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and a host of other vital supports.

The basic idea of the safety net is to prevent people from falling so far behind that they cannot catch up. So instead of making cuts, we should strengthen these programs and, of course, focus on creating jobs.

With the challenges facing our families today, the war on poverty continues. Let's not give in to the naysayers seeking to dismantle our safety net. Let's not retreat in our efforts to help people climb out of poverty. Let's fight even harder to provide an opportunity agenda, one that reaffirms the idea that if you work hard and play by the rules, you can get ahead. If we work together, I know we can get this done.

I yield.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PORTMAN. 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. PORTMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator MCCONNELL or his designee be recognized from 2 o'clock to 2:45 this afternoon.

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

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I rise today to address the question that is currently before the body; that is, whether we should extend the emergency unemployment insurance for millions of Americans who are still unable to find work. This is in addition to the 26 weeks that is provided in most States—some a little more, some a little less—and the question is whether we extend this again, as we have done several times since the great recession. The question is, should we extend it and, if so, how should we extend it? Should we pay for it? Should there be some training or other requirements attached to it so it works better?

It is a good debate to have. I came on the floor yesterday to say let's have a full debate on this issue. It is one of great importance to folks who are unemployed. It is also important to our Nation as a whole that we deal with this issue, to encourage economic growth, to get people back to work. I was encouraged yesterday that the Senate majority would permit appropriate amendments to this legislation. That is one reason I voted to proceed, of course with the understanding that we would have the opportunity to talk about this issue, and debate it, and offer amendments. One ought to be how we pay for it.

Second, we ought to be able to deal with the underlying problem. Unemployment insurance is more of a bandaid, and we need to be sure we are dealing with the underlying problem of a weak economy and the lack of jobs and the lack of a connection between the skills that are needed and the jobs that are available. Let's really get at this problem in a serious way.

I will be frank. I heard from a lot of people in the last 24 hours—after the vote on the motion to proceed—that they were surprised that I voted to proceed and that other Republicans did as well because they thought Republicans would all vote against it. In fact, I saw some press reports this morning indicating that some of the Democratic leadership would have been happier had that motion failed last night because then they could say: Well, we are blaming Republicans for being obstructionist.

I do not think my colleagues who voted the other way were being obstructionist. I think their concern was that they were not going to have the opportunity to debate this issue and to offer amendments that are sensible, that are relevant to the issue at hand—like how we pay for it, how we improve unemployment insurance so it works better for those who are unemployed.

But anyway, for my part, I took my colleagues at their word when they said they were serious about actually improving unemployment insurance and taking serious steps to deal with the lack of growth and economic opportunity in our economy today. So in good faith I voted on this motion to proceed yesterday, hoping again that we would be willing here in this body to have real debate, which is what the Senate is supposed to be about, have a debate over the long-term fiscally sound way forward on unemployment. I have come to the floor today in an effort to be sure that people understand there are alternatives out there, offer a specific idea to pay for the insurance, one that deals with fraud and abuse, one that is out of the President's budget actually, one that should be bipartisan.

I have heard earlier today, some have come to the floor on their side of the aisle and said: We should not pay for this extension. We should just go further into debt and deficit. My question would be: If we can pay for it, why would we not? Why would we want to take the country further into deficit this year, bust the budget caps that we just established in the budget agreement? I was one of nine Republicans who voted for that budget agreement. It was not perfect, but it set up a process going forward where we can get back to our constitutional duties here in the Senate of actually appropriating, meaning the oversight necessary of the Federal departments and agencies. There has been none over the last 4 years when we have not had a budget. Then prioritizing spending. That is what we are supposed to be doing. That is our constitutional responsibility.

It also did not raise taxes. It also does have a little bit of deficit reduction—not as much as it should have; it was not perfect, but it enabled us to move forward. So I voted for that budget. Now we are talking about, right after that, putting forward an unemployment emergency extension that is not paid for, that will bust those very caps. I am told a budget point of order is going to lie against this because of it.

That is not the way we should go. Let's pay for it. The debt and deficit are affecting our economy today. It is like a wet blanket over the economy. You cannot have trillion-dollar deficits year in and year out. This year it is $680 billion. People are saying, well, that is great.

Are you kidding? That is the fifth highest deficit in the history of our country. It all adds up to a $17 trillion debt—unprecedented. I believe that is understated given all the liabilities we have as a government. But the point is, we have never had debts of this level. They are historic levels. It is not only the wrong thing to do for our economy today and to help getting people back to work, but it is also clearly unfair to do to future generations. We have some young people on the floor this afternoon. It is even immoral that we are leaving this to them. So let's pay for this.

I was glad to hear Senator REID say yesterday of our efforts to fund this legislation, ''If they come with something serious, I'll talk to them.'' Well, I have something serious—I think other Members will as well—something that reflects, in my case, reforms proposed in the President's own budget, ideas that should be bipartisan.

My amendment would close a loophole that opens the system to double dipping. What do I mean by that? It is called concurrent receipts, where somebody is getting one Federal program, and then another Federal program they should not be eligible for if they have got the first one, specifically, people who are both on Social Security disability insurance, meaning they cannot work, SSDI, and also receiving funds from unemployment insurance, which means you are looking for a job or you are working. We also add trade adjustment assistance. That is exactly the same theory.

We should not allow double dipping. In fact, we should stop this abuse. This is in the President's budget. This reform makes sense. Social Security disability was designed to help people who are unable to work because of a serious medical condition. As we all know, the law requires those on unemployment insurance to actively seek out job opportunities. So the two do not work together. Let's stop the double dipping. These two programs are mutually exclusive. Those who cannot work should be on disability. Those who can work should be on unemployment insurance if they are eligible. By passing this simple amendment, we can close this loophole and save $5.4 billion, almost enough to pay for the entire 3-month extension that we are talking about on the table here today, which is about $6.2, $6.3 billion.

In addition, I will be adding another provision to my amendments that

takes the unemployment insurance program integrity provisions directly out of the President's budget. These are programs again in the President's budget to ensure that the unemployment insurance program is working properly, again taking out the fraud and the abuse in it. The President's budget instructs the Department of Labor to implement it. My amendment does too. By implementing the President's own plan to reduce these improper payments and speed reemployment, we save even more money in the long run. This pays for, again, this unemployment extension over 3 months.

I hope we can pass my amendment, pay for this extension, and show that this legislation is not just about politics—what we are talking about here on the floor is not just about politics, it is about actually helping people who are unemployed to get back to work. I hope when my Democratic colleagues say they are ready to take real action on getting our economy moving again, to help Americans who are suffering, they mean it.

By the way, the fact that we are having this debate, the fact that so many Americans are in need of long-term unemployment insurance in and of itself shows that something is not working. In fact, as we have talked about on this floor before, we are now at historic levels in terms of long-term unemployment, people who have been unemployed for more than 26 weeks.

The approach taken by the administration and many of my colleagues here and in the other body to bring down unemployment and get this economy moving does not seem to have worked, by their own standards. Recall that we had a stimulus package. It was said that unemployment would be far lower than it is today. So by their own standards, it has not worked. If it had, we would not be debating this today. We would not be talking about the need for an extension on an emergency basis of unemployment insurance.

We cannot spend our way to prosperity. That is what we tried to do, in my view, in the stimulus package. That is one reason it has not worked. We certainly tried that over the last 5 years. If you look at what the government has done, we spent trillions of dollars we did not have, we have burdened the next generation with previously unimaginable debt levels that we talked about earlier. We have now run 5 years of historic deficits—5 years, trillion-dollar deficits the first 4 years.

Before this administration we had never had a trillion-dollar deficit. Last year's deficit, again, $680 billion, the fifth largest in history, is certainly no cause for celebration, particularly when the Congressional Budget Office tells us that we are going to go back to trillion-dollar deficits within 10 years. So we obviously have a huge problem in terms of our debt and deficit.

What do we have to show for all of this spending that we did? Seventy-one months after the recession began, the economy has still not recovered the jobs we lost in that recession. This has never happened in the history of our country. We have never had a recovery this weak. We are down 1.3 million jobs. By comparison, we were up 10.4 million jobs at this point after the 1981–1982 recession. That recession was also deep. In fact, it was deeper if you measure it by the number of people who were unemployed.

Ronald Reagan came in, and frankly he took progrowth policies and put them in place and helped to create millions of jobs. By this time we were up 10.4 million jobs after that recession. We were up 9.8 million jobs after the 1990 recession at this point. We were up 4.8 million jobs after the 2001 recession. Remember that? The recovery was called the jobless recovery. Again, we have not even gained back the jobs at all yet after this recession. We were up 4.8 million jobs at this point after the 2001 recession.

Making matters even worse, 1 out of every 3 unemployed persons has been out of work for 27 weeks or longer. As I said, this rate of long-term unemployment is at levels we have not seen. You would think we would have learned a lesson here in Washington. You would think Washington would want to do something differently. Yet I heard the President and the majority leader just yesterday present an unemployment extension as if it were some kind of economic panacea, a silver bullet justifying their failure to pay for this extension with all of the growth they say it will generate.

Well, the Senate majority leader said yesterday, ''For every dollar we spend on unemployment benefits, it gets $1.50 back to us just like that.'' Just like that? Think about this. If unemployment benefits create so much growth, why would we just do a 3-month extension? Why not a 3-year extension? Why would there be any limit? Money may not grow on trees, but apparently in the eyes of some it grows from government programs.

That is not how the economy works. I know there are economists out there you can cite for just about anything. But the President's own economic advisors have written that unemployment benefits slow down the search for jobs. But we do not need to get into a battle of experts here. History has proven that just spending more money, even on unemployment benefits, is not the solution. It is not the long-term, serious solution to the problems we face as a country.

This extension, if it passes, will be the 11th time we have extended unemployment benefits in the last 5 years. These extensions have cost more than $200 billion. No economic boom has resulted from this spending, just as it did not result, as I said earlier, from the trillion dollars in stimulus money.

If spending were the answer, we would not be standing here today having this debate. We would be celebrating full employment. Our economy would not be better off if we had higher unemployment and we were paying out more in unemployment benefits. That is kind of the logical extension of what has been argued on the other side as to why we cannot pay for this. I cannot imagine anyone actually believes this.

Yet for too long we have treated government spending as if it does create wealth. If I take $1 from the Presiding Officer, take $1 from one person and give that dollar to someone else, that other person may be better off, but I did not add a dollar to the economy. Government programs have to come from somewhere. So that dollar is being taken from somewhere and given to somebody else. Somehow the notion is that is going to add to the economy.

Again, the logical extension is: Let's just continue to provide more and more government spending; everything will be great. That is not how it works. Dividing the pie up differently does not create more pie. It creates real, concrete progrowth policies to do that, policies that mean we are paying out less in unemployment benefits because more people have the skills they need to get good jobs. That is what we ought to be talking about.

Yes, I am willing to extend unemployment insurance and pay for it. But during that period, let's come up with a better unemployment insurance program that actually connects people to the jobs that are out there. Because there are a lot of jobs that require skills that are not being filled. Our employment system ought to, both for the long term and even for the short term, focus on that. How do you create better skills so that people have the opportunity, have the tools to be able to access those jobs?

Policies that allow more companies and small businesses to produce quality products they can sell here and around the world, creating better jobs and profits, would help. Implementing these kinds of policies is not as easy as extending unemployment benefits for a few months or raising the minimum wage. We will not be able to ram these kinds of policies through in a week on a party-line vote with no debate and no amendments. But there is a real solution to the chronic unemployment we are seeing in our States, and that is the only way to encourage the kind of income mobility that will close the income gap, not by tearing people down but by bringing people up. Progrowth economic policies obviously need to be part of the solution here. If we extend unemployment insurance, we should do so because people are hurting as a result of the failed policies in Washington. But we should not kid ourselves into believing that this extension alone will somehow solve these economic problems. Again, it certainly will not pay for itself. As I said earlier, you cannot take a dollar away from one person and give it to someone else and create more purchasing power. You are redistributing that across the economy.

It does not have to be that way. We can pass these pay-for amendments. I have my own amendments, as I said. Others have also proposed their amendments. I know Senator AYOTTE has an amendment I am supporting that, again, gets at fraud and abuse in government programs and says: Let's pay for the unemployment benefits.

She also, by the way, pays for veterans' benefits that were cut during the budget agreement we just passed. I also support that. She has a little left over for actual deficit reduction.

Senator COBURN is going to have a proposal out here. I think Senator HATCH will have one. Senator MCCONNELL will have one. My understanding is that Senator COBURN has one that is also out of the President's budget.

There are plenty of ideas here as to how to pay for this extension, short term, while we look at better ways to have the unemployment insurance system work, to connect people who are unemployed to the jobs that are out there, by giving them the skills they need. That is where the hard work begins.

We have got to get this country moving again. We have got to do things to actually increase economic growth and give people the skills they need to access the jobs that are out there. We need to pass bills such as the CAREER Act, bipartisan legislation I have introduced with Senator MIKE BENNET from Colorado.

In Ohio, we have about 400,000 people unemployed. We are told there are about 100,000 jobs right now open in Ohio. A lot of these jobs are high-tech jobs. Some are in advanced manufacturing, some are in bioscience, some in information technology. We need to be sure that the people who are unemployed get the skills they need to be able to take advantage of those jobs, those opportunities.

We can also start by working on tax reform. Everybody seems to talk about it. Let's do it. Corporate tax reform alone would result in a lot more revenue coming into the Federal Government by repatriating profits. It would help expand opportunities, not for the boardroom, for the people who work in those companies.

People who have looked at this at the Congressional Budget Office, the economic experts, have said: If we did corporate business tax reform, over 70 percent of the benefit goes right to the workers: higher pay, higher benefits. It is time to ensure that we have a growing economy, we are growing that pie, not just carving it up.

Let's streamline the regulations in this country. Currently the United States ranks 34th in the world in the time it takes to get a government green light to actually build something. Think about that. This is a key World Bank measure for ease of doing business. We want America to be at the top of that list, not halfway down that list. Unless we do that, we are not going to see the kind of investment we want in this country. How many jobs are lost every year because people cannot get a permit, that a good idea cannot be built? These are jobs that are there if we change the policies here in Washington, DC.

Congress continues to pat itself on the back for scoring political points rather than taking on these challenges that face our country. I can tell you who is not patting us on the back: It is the American people. They are not happy. They are not pleased with our progress. There is good reason. They are actually seeing their take-home pay go down as the deficit goes up, in, as the President talked about, a better economy.

Fifty years ago the United States declared a war on poverty. Yet poverty is still a major problem. The goal was noble, but the tools we used were not up to the challenge.

Since the recession began, 9 million more Americans have fallen into poverty and the median household income is down more than 8 percent. Poverty rates have actually increased during this administration with the policies we have.

It is time for a change. For decades we have exported to the nations around the world these principles that have allowed us to enjoy so much prosperity and success. We have said: Follow the American way; the free enterprise system works. We have preached to them this gospel, as well as our belief that by removing the shackles of government interference from the market—whether in the form of overregulation, overspending, or overtaxing—everyone can prosper.

As U.S. Trade Representative I had the opportunity to travel all around the world representing our great country. It was a great honor to tell people the benefits of liberalizing trade, knocking down barriers to increase economic growth and opportunity. It works. Entrepreneurs and job creators have lifted more people out of poverty around the world over the past few decades than any government program ever could because the free enterprise system does work. We need to get back to that.

Let's do something we can be proud of in this Chamber today. Let's empower the American people instead of the American Government. Let's not kick the can of spending down the road any longer. Let's take some votes. Not all of them are going to be easy votes, and they shouldn't be. After all, that is what we are elected to do—take tough votes. These votes we take today, though, can make a real difference in people's lives.

Let's start today. Let's pay for this legislation. Let's use these pay-fors we just talked about that are bipartisan, that are sensible, that can be supported on both sides of the aisle and in both bodies. Let's ensure that we put in place the progrowth policies so that we aren't just giving people a little more unemployment insurance for a few more months but giving them the opportunity to get a job and the dignity and self-respect that come with that.

I urge my colleagues to support my amendment, pay for this legislation, put politics aside, and get to work for the American people.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, over the past several years those of us who are fortunate enough to serve have engaged in many fierce debates. Some have been forced upon us by external events, including a searing financial crisis, while others were brought about by an unapologetically liberal President who promised dramatic change and who has worked very hard to follow through on that pledge—in some cases, even in the face of legal obstacles and widespread public opposition. So change has, indeed, come.

Despite the daily drumbeat of headlines about gridlock and dysfunction in Washington, the truth is that an activist President and a Democratic-controlled Senate have managed to check off an awful lot of items on their wish list one way or another. Yet just as important as what they did, my colleagues, is how they did it because that also has been at the heart of so many of the fights we have had around here over the past few years. These conflicts haven't stemmed from personal grievances or contempt, as some would have it. They are, instead, the inevitable consequence of an administration that was in such a hurry to impose its agenda that it neglected to persuade the public of its wisdom and then cast aside one of the greatest tools we have in this country for guaranteeing a durable and stable legislative consensus, and that tool is the Senate.

Remember, I think we all know partisanship is not some recent invention. American politics has always been divided between two ideological camps. Today that is reflected in the two major parties, but it has actually always been there. On one side are those who proudly place their trust in government and its agents to guide our institutions and direct our lives. On the other are those of us who put our trust in the wisdom and the creativity of private citizens working voluntarily with each other and through more local mediating institutions, guided by their own sense of what is right, what is fair, and what is good.

Recent polling suggests that most Americans fall squarely into the latter camp. People are generally confident in their local governments but lack confidence in Washington.

Despite the political and ideological divides which have always existed in our country, we have almost always managed to work out our differences—not by humiliating the other side into submission but through simple give-and-take. It is the secret of our success. The same virtues that make any

friendship, marriage, family, or business work are the ones that have always made this country work. And the place where it happens, the place where all the national conflicts and controversies that arise in this big, diverse, wonderful country of ours have always been resolved, is in this Chamber.

I realize it may not be immediately obvious why that is the case, but the fact is that every serious student of this institution, from De Tocqueville to our late colleague Robert Byrd, has seen the Senate as uniquely important to America's stability and to its flourishing. In their view, it has made all the difference, and here is why—because whether it was the fierce early battles over the shape and scope of the Federal Government or those that surrounded industrialization or those that preceded and followed a nation-rending civil war or those surrounding the great wars of the 20th century or the expansion of the franchise or a decades-long cold war or the war on terror, we have always found a way forward, sometimes haltingly but always steadily, and the Senate is the tool that has enabled us to find our footing almost every time.

I mention all this because as we begin a new year, it is appropriate to step back from all the policy debates that have occupied us over the past few years and focus on another debate we have been having, and the debate we have been having is over the State of this institution. What have we become? It is not a debate that ever caught fire with the public or with the press, but it is a debate that should be of grave importance to all of us because on some level every single one of us has to be at least a little bit uneasy about what happened here last November. But even if you are completely at peace with what happened in November, even if you think it was perfectly fine to violate the all-important rules that say changing the rules requires the assent of two-thirds of Senators duly elected and sworn, none of us should be happy with the trajectory the Senate was on even before that day, even before November, or the condition we find the Senate in 225 years after it was created. I don't think anybody is comfortable with where we are. I know I am not, and I bet, even though there is nobody over here at the moment, I bet almost none of them are either.

I wish to share a few thoughts on what I think we have lost over the last 7 years and what can be done about it together. ''Together'' obviously requires the involvement, one would think, of some people on the other side of the aisle. Even though they are not here to listen, they have been invited.

Let me state at the outset that it is not my intention to point the finger of blame at anybody, although some of that is inevitable. I don't presume to have all of the answers either, and I am certainly not here to claim that we are without fault. But I am absolutely certain of one thing: The Senate can be better than it is. Many of us have seen a better Senate than we have now, no matter who was in the majority. This institution can be better than it is. I just can't believe that on some level everyone in this Chamber, including the folks on the other side, doesn't agree. It just can't be the case that we are content with the theatrics and the messaging wars that go on day after day. It can't be the case that Senators who grew up reading about the great statesmen who made their name and their mark over the years are now suddenly content to stand in front of a giant poster board making some poll-tested point-of-the month day after day and then run back to their respective corners and congratulate each other on how right they are. I can't believe we are all happy about that on either side.

Don't misunderstand me—there is a time for making a political point and even scoring a few points. I know that as well as anybody. But it can't be the only thing we do. Surely we do something other than scoring political points against each other. It cheapens the service we have sworn to provide to our constituents. It cheapens the Senate, which is a lot bigger than any of us.

Hopefully, we can all agree that we have a problem. I realize both sides have their own favorite account of what caused it. We have our talking points, and they have their talking points. We all repeat them with great repetition, and we all congratulate each other for being on the right side of the debate. I understand that. People over there think Republicans abuse the rules, and we think they do. But, as I said, my goal here isn't to make converts on that front; my purpose is to suggest that the Senate can be better than it has been and that it must be if we are to remain great as a nation.

The crucial first step of any vision that gets us there is to recognize that vigorous debate about our differences isn't some sickness to be lamented. Vigorous debate is not a problem. When did that become a problem? It is actually a sign of strength to have vigorous debates.

It is a common refrain among pundits that the fights we have around here are pointless. They are not at all pointless. Every single debate we have around here is about something important. What is unhealthy is when we neglect the means that we have always used to resolve our differences. That is the real threat to this country, not more debate. When did that become a problem?

The best mechanism we have for working through our differences and arriving at a durable consensus is the U.S. Senate. An Executive order can't do it. The fiat of a nine-person court can't do it. A raucous and precarious partisan majority in the House can't do it. The only institution that can make stable and enduring laws is the one we have in which all 50 States are represented equally and where every single Senator has a say in the laws we pass. This is what the Senate was designed for. It is what the Senate is supposed to be about, and almost—almost—always has been.

Take a look at some of the most far-reaching legislation of the past century. Look at the vote tallies. Medicare and Medicaid were both approved with the support of about half the Members of the minority. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 passed with the votes of 30 out of the 32 Members of the Republican minority—all but two Republican Senators. There weren't many of them. That was the year after the Goldwater debacle. Only two Senators voted against the Social Security Act, and only eight voted against the Americans with Disabilities Act.

None of this happened, by the way—none of it happened—by throwing these bills together in the back room and dropping them on the floor with a stopwatch running. It happened through a laborious process of legislating, persuasion, and coalition building. It took time and it took patience and hard work and it guaranteed that every one of these laws had stability—stability. Compare that—compare that, if you will—to the attitude behind ObamaCare. When Democrats couldn't convince any of us the bill was worth supporting as written, they decided to do it on their own and pass it on a party-line vote and now we are seeing the result.

The chaos this law has visited on our country isn't just deeply tragic; it was, my friends, entirely predictable—entirely predictable. That will always be the case if we approach legislation without regard for the views of the other side. Without some meaningful buy-in, we guarantee a food fight, we guarantee instability, and we guarantee strife.

It may very well have been the case that on ObamaCare the will of the country was not to pass the bill at all. That is what I would have concluded if Republicans couldn't get a single Democratic vote for legislation of that magnitude. I would have thought: Well, maybe this isn't such a great idea. But Democrats plowed forward anyway. They didn't want to hear it. The results are clear. It is a mess, an absolute mess.

The Senate exists to prevent that kind of situation. Because without a moderating institution as the Senate, today's majority passes something and tomorrow's majority repeals it; today's majority proposes something, and tomorrow's majority opposes it. We see that in the House all the time. But when the Senate is allowed to work the way it was designed to, it arrives at a result that is acceptable to people all along the political spectrum. That, my friends, is the whole point.

We have lost our sense for the value of that, and none of us should be at peace. Because if America is to face up

to the challenges we face in the decades ahead, she will need the Senate the Founders, in their wisdom, intended, not the hollow shell of the Senate we have today—not the hollow shell of the Senate we have today.

First, one of the traditional hallmarks of the Senate is a vigorous committee process. It is also one of the main things we have lost. There was a time—not that long ago—when chairmen and ranking members had major influence and used their positions to develop national policy on everything from farm policy to nuclear arms. These men and women enriched the entire Senate through their focus and their expertise. Just as important, they provided an important counterweight to the executive branch. They provided one more check on the White House. If a President thought something was a good idea, he had better make sure he ran it by the committee chairman who had been studying it for the past two decades. If the chairman disagreed, then they would have a serious debate and probably reach a better product as a result.

The Senate should be setting national priorities, not simply waiting on the White House to do it for us. The place to start that process is in the committees. With few exceptions, that is gone. With very few exceptions, that is gone. It is a big loss to the institution, but most importantly it is a big loss for the American people who expect us to lead.

Here is something else we have gained from a robust committee process over the years. Committees have actually served as a school of bipartisanship. If we think about it, it just makes sense. By the time a bill gets through committee, one would expect it to come out in a form that was generally broadly acceptable to both sides; nobody got everything, but more often than not everybody got something, and the product was stable because there was buy-in and a sense of ownership on both sides.

On the rare occasions when that has happened recently, we have seen that work. The committee process in the Senate is a shadow of what it used to be, thereby marginalizing, reducing the influence of every single Member of the Senate on both sides of the aisle. Major legislation is now routinely drafted not in committee but in the majority leader's conference room and then dropped on the floor with little or no opportunity for Members to participate in the amendment process, virtually guaranteeing a fight.

There is a lot of empty talk around here about the corrosive influence of partisanship. If we truly want to do something about it, we should support a more robust committee process. That is the best way to end the permanent sort of shirts-against-skins contest the Senate has become. Bills should go through committee. If Republicans are fortunate enough—if Republicans are fortunate enough—to gain the majority next year, that will be done.

Second, bills should come to the floor and be thoroughly debated. We have an example of that going on right now, and that includes a robust amendment process. In my view, there is far too much paranoia about the other side around here. What are we afraid of? Both sides have taken liberties and abused privileges. I will admit that. But the answer isn't to provoke even more. The answer is to let folks debate. This is the Senate. Let folks debate. Let the Senate work its will, and that means bringing bills to the floor. It means having a free and open amendment process. That is legislating.

That is what we used to do. That is exactly the way this place operated just a few years ago. The senior Senator from Illinois, the Democratic assistant majority leader, likes to say—or at least used to say—that if you don't want to fight fires, don't become a fireman, and if you don't want to cast tough votes, don't come to the Senate. I guess he hasn't said that lately.

When we used to be in the majority, I remember telling people: Look. The good news is we are in the majority. The bad news is, in order to get the bill across the floor, you have to cast a lot of votes you don't want to take—and we did it and people groaned about it, complained about it. Yet the Sun still came up the next day and everybody felt as though they were a part of the process.

Senator DURBIN was right about that when he said it. I think it is time to allow Senators on both sides to more fully participate in the legislative process, and that means having a more open amendment process around here. As I said, obviously it requires us, from time to time, to cast votes we would rather not cast. But we are all grownups. We can take that. There is rarely ever a vote we cast around here that is fatal.

The irony of it all is that kind of process makes the place a lot less contentious. In fact, it is a lot less contentious when we vote on tough issues than when we don't, because when we are not allowed to do that, everybody is angry about being denied the opportunity to do what they were sent here to do, which is to represent the people who elected us and offer ideas we think are worth considering.

At a meeting we just came out of, Senator CORNYN was pointing out there were 13 amendments people on this side of the aisle would like to offer on this bill, all of them related to the subject and important to each Senator who seriously felt there was a better way to improve the bill that is on the floor right now. But, alas, I expect that opportunity will not be allowed because one person who is allowed to get prior recognition can prevent us from getting any amendments or, even worse still, pick our amendments for us, decide which of our amendments are OK and which aren't.

I remember the late Ted Stevens telling the story about when he first got here. Senator Mansfield was still the majority leader, and he tried to offer an amendment—Senator Stevens did—and the Member of the majority who was managing the bill prevented it, in effect. Senator Mansfield came over to Senator Stevens, took his amendment, went back to his desk and sent it to the floor for him. He sent it to the floor for him. That was the Senate not too long ago.

If someone isn't allowed to get a vote on something they believe in, of course they are going to retaliate. Of course they are going to retaliate. But if they get a vote every once in a while, they do not feel the need to. Voting on amendments is good for the Senate and it is good for the country. Our constituents should have a greater voice in the process.

Since July of last year, there have been four Republican rollcall votes. In the whole second half of 2013, Members on this side of the aisle have gotten four rollcall votes—stunning. That is today's Senate.

So let me say this: If Republicans are fortunate enough to be in the majority next year, amendments will be allowed, Senators will be respected, and we will not make an attempt to wring controversy out of an institution which expects, demands, and approves of great debates about the problems confronting the country.

A common refrain from Democrats is that Republicans have been too quick to block bills from ever coming to the floor. What they fail to mention of course is that often we have done this either because we have been shut out of the drafting process—in other words, had nothing to do with writing the bill in the first place—or it had been made pretty clear that there wouldn't be any amendments, which is, in all likelihood, the situation we are in this very day.

In other words, we already knew the legislation was shaping up to be a purely partisan exercise in which people we represent wouldn't have any meaningful input at all. Why would we want to participate in that? Is it good for our constituents? Does it lead to a better product? Of course not. All it leads to is a lot more acrimony.

So look. I get it. If Republicans had just won the White House and the House and had a 60-vote majority in the Senate, we would be tempted to empty our outbox too. But you can't spend 2 years emptying your outbox and then complain about the backlash. If you want fewer fights, give the other side a say.

That brings me to one of the biggest things we have lost around here, as I see it. The big problem, my colleagues, has never been the rules. Senators from both parties have in the past revered and defended the rules during our Nation's darkest hours. The real problem is an attitude that views the Senate as an assembly line for one party's partisan legislative agenda rather than as a place to build consensus to solve national problems. We have become far

too focused on making a point instead of making a difference, making a point instead of making good stable laws. We have gotten too comfortable with viewing everything we do here through the prism of the next election instead of the prism of duty, and everyone suffers as a result.

As I see it, a major turning point came during the final years of the Bush administration, when the Democratic majority held vote after vote on bills they knew wouldn't pass. I am not saying Republicans have never staged a show vote when we were in the majority. I am not saying I don't even enjoy a good messaging vote from time to time. But we have to wonder, if that is all we are doing, why are we here? It has become entirely too routine, and it diminishes the Senate. I don't care which party you are in; you came here to legitimate, to make a difference for your constituents. Yet over the past several years the Senate seems more like a campaign studio than a serious legislative body.

Both sides have said and done things over the past few years we probably wish we hadn't. But we can improve the way we do business. We can be more constructive. We can work through our differences. We can do things that need to be done. But there will have to be major changes if we are going to get there. The committee process must be restored. We need to have an open amendment process.

Finally, let me suggest that we need to learn how to put in a decent week's work around here. Most Americans don't work 3 days a week. They would be astonished to find out that is about it around here.

How about the power of the clock to force consensus? The only way 100 Senators will be truly able to have their say, the only way we will be able to work through our tensions and disputes is if we are here more. A number of you will remember this: Not too long ago, Thursday night was the main event around here. There is a huge incentive to finish on Thursday night if you want to leave on Friday. It is amazing how it worked.

Even the most eager beaver among us with a long list of amendments which were good for the country—maybe 10 or 12—around noon on Thursday, it would be down to two or one by midnight on Thursday. It was amazing how consent would be reached when fatigue set in. All it took was for the majority leader—who is in charge of the agenda—to say: Look, this is important. There is bipartisan support for this. This came out of committee. We want to have an open amendment process, but we want to finish this week, and we can finish on Thursday afternoon or Thursday night or Friday morning. We almost never get worn out around here.

What happened to the fatigue factor to bring things to a close? Amendments voluntarily go away, but important ones still get offered, and everybody feels like they have a chance to be involved in the process no matter which side of the aisle they are on. This is obviously particularly effective on bills which come out of committee, with bipartisan support, so there is an interest in actually passing it. We almost never do that anymore—almost never. On those occasions, we worked late, sometimes well into the morning.

I know that sounds kind of quaint for people who haven't been around here very long, but it actually worked. There is nothing wrong with staying up a little later and getting to a conclusion. I can remember the majority leader himself, when he was whip, walking around late at night on Thursdays with his whip card making sure he had enough votes to do whatever he wanted to do.

When you finished one of those debates, whether you ended up voting for the bill or voting against the bill, you didn't have the feeling that, unless you chose to go away with your amendment, you had been denied the opportunity to participate and to be a part of the process and actually make a difference for your constituents.

That is how you reach consensus: By working and talking and cooperating through give-and-take. That is the way everyone's patience is worn down, not just the majority leader's patience. Everyone can agree on a result even if they don't vote for it in the end. Using the clock to force consensus is the greatest proof of that, and if Republicans are in the majority next year, we will use the clock. Everybody gets an opportunity, but we will use the clock, we will work harder, and get results.

Restoring the committee process, allowing Senators to speak through an open amendment process, and extending the workweek are just a few things the Senate could and should do differently. None of it would guarantee an end to partisan rancor. There is nothing wrong with partisan debate. It is good for the country. None of it would cause us to change our principles or our views about what is right and what is wrong with our country.

Partisanship itself is not the problem. The real problem has been a growing lack of confidence in the Senate's ability to mediate the tensions and disputes we have always had around here. There are many reasons some have lost that confidence, and ultimately both parties have to assume some of the blame.

But we can't be content to leave it at that. For the good of the country, we need to work together to restore this institution. America's strength and resilience has always depended on our ability to adapt to the various challenges of our day. Sometimes that has meant changing the rules when both parties think it is warranted. When the majority leader decided a few weeks back to defy bipartisan opposition—there was bipartisan opposition to what happened in November—by changing the rules that govern this place with a simple majority, he broke something. He broke something.

But our response can't be to just sit back and accept the demise of the Senate. This body has survived mistakes and excesses before. Even after some of its worst periods, it has found a way to spring back and to be the place where even the starkest differences and the fiercest ideological disputes are hashed out by consensus and mutual respect. Indeed, it is during periods of its greatest polarization that the value of the Senate is most clearly seen.

So let me wrap it up this way. We are all familiar with the Lyndon Johnson reign around here. Robert Caro has given us that story in great detail. Some look at LBJ's well-known heavyhandedness as a kind of mastery. Personally, I have always believed the leader who replaced him was a better fit for this place, and evidently so did Johnson's colleagues who elected Mansfield upon Johnson's departure with overwhelming enthusiasm. They had had it up to here with LBJ, and they were excited that he was gone.

In fact, Caro reports that he tried to come to the first lunch after he became Vice President and was going to act as the sort of de facto majority leader even though he was now Vice President. That was, shall I say, unenthusiastically received, and he was almost literally thrown out of the lunch never to return, and Mansfield was, as I said, enthusiastically chosen to replace him.

The chronicles of LBJ's life and legacy usually leave out what I just told you, but by the time he left the Senate, as I indicated, his colleagues had had enough of him, right up to here. They may have bent to his will while he was here, but the moment they had a chance to be delivered from his iron-fisted rule, they took it.

With their support, Mike Mansfield would spend the next 16 years restoring the Senate to a place of greater cooperation and freedom. As we look at what the Senate could be—not what it is now, but what it could be—Mansfield's period gives us a clue.

There are many well-known stories about Mansfield's fairness and equanimity as leader. But they all seem to come down to one thing, and that was his unbending belief that every single Senator was equal. That was Mansfield's operating mode: Every single Senator is equal. He acted that way on a daily basis and conducted himself that way on a daily basis: The unbending belief that every Senator should be treated as equal.

So, look. Both sides will have to work to get us back to where we should be. It is not going to happen overnight. We haven't had much practice lately. In fact, we are completely out of practice at doing what I just suggested as the first steps to get us back to normal. But it is a goal I truly believe we can all agree on and agree to strive toward together, and it takes no rules change. This is a behavioral problem.

It doesn't require a rules change. We just need to act differently with each other, respect the committee process, have an open amendment process, and work a little harder. None of that requires a rules change, because restoring this institution is the only way we will ever solve the challenges we face. That is the lesson of history and the lesson of experience. We would all be wise to heed it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I congratulate the Republican leader for his remarks. Without being presumptuous, I think I could express the hope that all of us feel that he will help us restore the Senate to the role the American people need it to play in this country.

There is a new history of the Senate, ''The American Senate,'' written by Neil MacNeil, the late Neil MacNeil, who wrote the best book about the House of Representatives, and the former Historian of the Senate. I suspect this book is likely to become the best chronicle of this body. It speaks of the Senate as ''the one touch of authentic genius in the American political system.'' It needs to be restored to that position.

The Republican leader is absolutely right. This does not require a change of rules. This requires a change of behavior—some behavior on our part on this side of the aisle, but a great deal of behavior on the part of whomever the majority leader of the Senate is, because that is the person who sets the agenda.

The debate for this year really is: Will this year be the end of the Senate—which is what the distinguished majority leader said it would be if we ever changed the rules in a way that allowed the majority to cut off debate—or will it be the year in which the Senate is restored, restored to that role of authentic genius in the American system? I hope it would be that way. I hope it starts tomorrow because it could be started as quickly as tomorrow because it requires no change of rules, only a change in behavior, and that could happen as soon as tomorrow. But we know it can happen after November if we have six more Republican Senators on this side.

We have heard your commitment on the floor today about how the committees can operate, about how amendments should operate. We have heard that before in our own meetings, in private lunches, and I am glad you took the occasion in this eloquent way to say to the American people and all of us what we expect out of service in the Senate.

I had the privilege, as the Senator from Kentucky did, of seeing Senator Mansfield as the leader of this body. I have not served in the Senate as long as others who were here, but I came here—it seems hard to believe—47 years ago as a young aide to a Senator who eventually became the majority leader of the Senate, Howard Baker. Those were the days of Mansfield and Dirksen. Those were the days when Barry Goldwater and John Tower and Hubert Humphrey would engage in hours of debates here and hug each other at the end of their discussion. Those were the days when the Democratic majority leader would offer an amendment of a Republican Senator whose amendment had been denied unfairly, he thought. Those were the days of committees that did their work and Republicans and Democrats who came to the floor and together offered bills.

I saw the Senate in the 1970s when I came back and Senator Baker was the Republican leader and I saw it in the 1980s and the 1990s. I saw what the Republican leader said—let's take the Panama Canal debate. Senator Baker and Senator Byrd would run the Senate in the way the Republican leader suggested, in the way most majority leaders have suggested. They would come to the floor and they would put a bill on the floor that a Republican and a Democratic Senator agreed on—let's say it is Senator MCCAIN and Senator LEVIN, Senator INHOFE and Senator LEVIN. They would ask for amendments. They might get 300 amendments. They would then ask for unanimous consent to cut off all the amendments and of course they would get it because everyone had a chance to have his or her amendment.

Then within that unanimous consent agreement would be a procedure for how to vote on them, and they would say: We are here on Monday and we are going to finish this week, just as the Republican leader had said.

It does not work perfectly. There was a Senator from Alabama, and then there was a Senator from Ohio, and they did all they could to put glue in the works. But the majority leader had all the tools he needed to run the Senate in that way. Everybody got a say. Senator Byrd, in his last remarks before the Rules Committee, and I was there to hear it, said we should never tear down this necessary fence. He meant the filibuster that protects us from an excess of the executive and runaway popular factions. But he said one other thing. Senator Byrd said in 2010 that any majority leader had the tools he needed already in the rules to operate this Senate in the way it should be run. So we need a change in behavior, not a change of the rules.

One more example that goes to the point the Senator from Kentucky made. How important is it to be able to offer an amendment? Serving in the Senate today is like being invited to join the Grand Ole Opry and not being allowed to sing. The people of Tennessee expect me to have an opinion on their behalf about ObamaCare, about Iran, about all of the issues—how do we help unemployed Americans get a job, about the minimum wage or the lack of it. They expect me to have a say about that, not because they want to hear me but because I am their voice.

Senator Byrd wrote eloquently about that in his book. He talked about the Panama Canal debate. There was a tough debate. They didn't just bring the Panama Canal treaty here and plop it on the floor and say we are going to vote on it next Monday. Do you think it would have gotten 67 votes? No, it would not have gotten 67 votes. How did it get 67 votes? The Democratic leader, Senator Byrd, and the Republican leader, Senator Baker, read David McCullough's book and changed their minds and they both supported the treaty. Then they allowed every single amendment and reservation that anybody wanted to offer.

Senator Byrd wrote that many of those were killer amendments. In other words, they were designed to kill the treaty. But, he said, we allowed every one of them—192 of them. Nothing passed that was not acceptable to the joint leadership. He said we beat everything else. We tabled them or defeated them. But if we had not allowed that to happen and the Senators had not had a chance to have their say, we would have never ratified the treaty.

I know there may be others who want to speak. But we have gone down a trail in the last several years—just a few years—that I never thought imaginable. We have 43 new Members of the Senate, 43 Members of the Senate who are in their first term, plus 1, the Senator from Indiana, who is in his first term but served before so he has a broader view of this. Those Senators have never seen this body operate properly. Most of them are on the other side. So it is not necessarily their fault that this is happening, but this is not the way the Senate earned the reputation as the unique deliberative body in the world. No one would recognize it as that today. No one would recognize it as the authentic touch of creative genius in the American system of government.

My hope would be that the Democratic leader would recognize this and have a change of behavior tomorrow, or maybe later this afternoon. But if he does not, I hope the American people take this seriously and take it into account when they cast their votes in November and put six more Republicans on this side of the aisle so a Republican leader can restore this body to the luster it deserves, and the American people deserve, as the authentic touch of genius in the American political system.

Mr. WICKER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative 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 (Mr. COONS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we just heard a very eloquent speech given by

the Republican leader on the Senate floor about the history of the Senate and the role it has played in our democracy, its past, and what could be its future if we can restore it to where it once was.

The leader talked a lot about what used to be taken for granted around here, such as the committee process working and functioning where committees reported legislation out, worked on it, and brought it to the floor.

We had an amendment process. When legislation got to the floor, it could actually be debated. We would have amendments offered and amendments would be voted on. Individual Senators had an opportunity to offer amendments and could thereby be the voice our people who elected us to be here in the Senate.

Unfortunately, in many respects with this current Senate, the wheels have come off. We find ourselves with a process where typically the amendment tree is filled, which blocks amendments from being offered. Perhaps the best factoid with regard to that is that there have only been four Republican amendments voted on since July—half a year. Over the course of half a year, we have had four Republican amendments that were voted on in the Senate. In any institution where there is any form of open debate and open amendment process, there is going to be a lot more votes than that, and I think that is very telling about where we are.

I was here as a young staffer back in 1985 and 1986. At that time Senator Bob Dole was the majority leader in the Senate. It was a very different place. I worked on some issues for my boss, and he had his opportunity, as did other Senators at that time, to come to the Senate floor, offer amendments, and speak out on behalf of his constituents on issues that were important to them and important to him, and that is something that has become a bygone era.

I also had the opportunity—prior to being elected to the Senate—to serve in the other body, the House of Representatives, where things are very structured. There is a rules committee there that basically regulates what legislation comes to the floor, what amendments will be made in order, and how much time is allowed for debate on each amendment. That is how that institution was structured.

The Senate, as Senator MCCONNELL the Republican leader pointed out earlier, is a very different institution by design. Our Founders wanted it to be different. Senator ALEXANDER, in his remarks, talked about an author who described the Senate as a touch of authentic genius. We have gotten very far away from that in terms of its historic role and certainly what should be its role today as we debate major policy and major legislation that impacts over 300 million Americans.

Today I come to the floor to discuss an issue that was debated here a few years ago, which is an example—a byproduct, if you will—of one-party rule, where a big piece of legislation is jammed through in a partisan way; that is, ObamaCare.

My colleagues on the Democratic side recently spent a lot of time talking about income inequality. After 5 years of stagnation in the Obama economy and an ever-growing gap between the rich and poor, I say it is high time for us to talk about that. But a critical part of that discussion that Democrats don't want to have has to be the ways in which ObamaCare is contributing to the problem.

As the last few months have made clear, ObamaCare is making it worse for millions of Americans. Huge premium increases and soaring out-of-pocket costs mean that families will have to take money that they would have used to buy their first home or pay for a child's college education and use it instead to pay for health care. Crippling mandates on employers mean that fewer jobs are available for the unemployed and hours are reduced for workers. As if the economic problems caused by the law aren't enough, recent weeks have made clear that the quality of care is likely to diminish thanks to the President's health care law.

Contrary to the President's promise that you could keep the doctor you had and liked, millions of Americans are discovering they will be losing their doctors this year and their choice of replacement is limited. Why? Because ObamaCare provides an incentive for insurers to limit the pool of doctors—and I might add hospitals as well—that you can visit. The President's health care law placed a number of new burdens on insurers, from new taxes to a requirement that everyone with preexisting conditions be covered at the same rate as healthy individuals.

On top of that, the law gave States the authority to tell insurance companies how much they are allowed to charge for their health plans. As a result, insurance companies are facing huge new cost increases with very few ways to cover those costs. Many companies have chosen the one cost control measure still available to them; that is, limiting their networks of doctors and hospitals.

In California, for example, as a Time magazine article recently reported, Blue Shield offered doctors a choice—be reimbursed up to 30 percent less for medical care or be excluded from the network. The Time article was entitled ''Keeping Your Doctor Under ObamaCare Is No Easy Feat'' and goes on to report that ''among the providers who declined to accept the lower rates were some of the state's most prestigious—and expensive—hospitals, including Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles and hospitals affiliated with the University of California.''

There is a reason these hospitals are prestigious and expensive. They are on the cutting edge of medical research and offer breakthrough treatments that are unavailable at many other hospitals. People come to these hospitals when other treatments have failed, and they often find hope. But these kinds of hospitals—world-class, cutting-edge facilities—are the hospitals most likely to be excluded from exchange plans.

Time reports that ''a December 13 McKinsey study of 20 U.S. Metropolitan areas found that two-thirds of ACA plans analyzed had 'narrow' or 'ultra' narrow networks, with at least 30 percent of top 20 hospitals excluded for coverage.''

The consequences of these narrow or ultranarrow networks are many. First, of course, these networks might not include your doctor. If you have been forced off your health plan into a new private plan or exchange plan, your new plan may not cover the doctor you have been seeing for years—the doctor you like and who knows your medical history. This is detrimental to any patient, but for someone who is being treated for a serious illness, this could be devastating.

Switching doctors midstream while being treated for cancer or another serious illness could have a disastrous impact on the quality of the care the patient receives.

In addition to losing the doctor you have and like, these narrow networks also mean your choice of a replacement will be limited—at times severely limited—and that the same quality of care may simply not be available in the new network.

Still another consequence, as Time points out, is the distance people may have to travel to get to their doctor or hospital. Excluding hospitals from an insurance network may not present a huge travel problem for urban residents—the article notes—but residents in rural areas may be forced to drive a long way to reach a hospital in their network.

Time quotes Kaiser Family Foundation senior fellow Karen Pollitz, who notes that exchange customers in central Maine have to travel as far as Portland to reach a covered hospital. That could be a 2½-hour drive. That is not exactly ideal if someone is, say, having a baby or a serious health crisis.

Let's suppose that you do somehow find an affordable plan on the exchanges that does cover your doctor. You still may not be able to get care. A recent FOX News article focused on expert warnings that the health exchange system may start to look a lot like Medicaid, the Federal health insurance program for the poor. Similar to the exchanges, Medicaid features narrow provider networks, as many doctors either refuse Medicaid patients all together or limit the number they see because of Medicaid's lower reimbursements.

So what is the result? Medicaid patients generally face worse outcomes than patients with private insurance.

They wait longer for doctors if they can get in to see them at all. The survey published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that 66 percent of children on Medicaid were denied appointments with specialists compared to just 11 percent of children covered by private insurance. Patients on Medicaid are more likely to suffer complications and spend longer in the hospital, and they are more likely to die from cancer, surgical complications, and other problems.

Unfortunately, this could soon be the future of those forced into narrow networks on the exchanges. Patients will be denied access to top doctors and hospitals and will be forced to compete with other patients for access to a limited number of health care providers. Even those Americans whose plans cover their preferred doctors will not necessarily be able to get in to see their doctor if he is forced to start limiting the number of exchange patients he takes.

Analysts, Fox News warns, ''emphasize . . . that having health insurance won't necessarily translate into access to health care.''

Let me repeat that: Analysts emphasize that having health insurance won't necessarily translate into access to health care.

This is what the grand promise of ObamaCare has come to: Even those who have managed to make their way through the broken exchange Web sites and find an affordable plan still may not be able to get health care.

Is this the rosy future we were promised? ObamaCare was supposed to fix our health care system. The President promised it would reduce costs and expand access to care. Every American was supposed to benefit. Instead, millions of Americans have lost their plans. Health insurance costs have soared. There are parents who now can't afford to insure their children and cancer patients who are losing their doctors and hospitals. Those few who have gained coverage are facing a system well on its way to becoming a copy of Medicaid.

Surely we can do better. We have to do better. It is time to abandon the failed ObamaCare experiment and move on to real health care reform. We can do that and we should do that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

TRUTH IN SETTLEMENTS ACT

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I rise to support the Truth in Settlements Act. This bipartisan legislation, which I introduced earlier today with my colleague from Oklahoma, Dr. COBURN, will help the public hold Federal agencies accountable for the settlements they make with corporate wrongdoers.

I am honored to partner with Dr. COBURN on this bill. In his decade in the Senate, he has been a leader in the fight for greater government transparency. Dr. COBURN and I do not agree on every issue, but we strongly agree that sunlight is a critical component of good government. That is the motivation behind the Truth in Settlements Act, and I am proud to fight alongside Dr. COBURN to advance this legislation.

When companies break the law, Federal enforcement agencies are responsible for holding them accountable. In nearly every instance, agencies choose to resolve cases through settlement rather than going to a public trial. The government agencies defend this practice by arguing that their eagerness to settle is in the best interests of the American people. But their actions paint a very different picture.

If agencies were truly confident that these settlements were good deals for the public, they would be enthusiastic about publicly disclosing all of the key details of those agreements—hang it right out there so everyone can see what a great job they did on behalf of the American people.

So is that what they do? No. Instead, time after time, agencies do the opposite, hiding critical details about their settlements in the fine print or, worse, hiding those details entirely out of public view.

Copies of these agreements—or even the basic facts about the agreement—are not easily accessible online. Many agencies regularly deem agreements confidential without any public explanation. When agencies do make public statements about these agreements, they often trumpet large dollar amounts of money for the taxpayers. What they don't trumpet is that the companies often pay dramatically less than the ''sticker price''—through ''credits''—for engaging in routine activities or through potentially huge tax deductions.

Add up all of these tricks and we end up with a predictable result: Too often the American people only see what the agencies want them to see about these agreements.

These hidden details can make all the difference. When we dig below the surface, settlements that seem tough and fair can end up looking like sweetheart deals.

For example, last year, Federal regulators entered into a settlement with 13 mortgage servicers accused of illegal foreclosure practices. The ''sticker price'' on the settlement was $8.5 billion—that is a really nice headline—but $5.2 billion of the settlement was in the form of credits, not in cash outlays. These credits were described in the government's press release as covering what they called ''loan modifications and forgiveness of deficiency judgments.'' So what does that mean? Well, it turns out the servicers could rack up those credits by forgiving mere fractions of large unpaid loans. So, for example, if a servicer wrote down $15,000 of a $500,000 unpaid loan balance, that servicer doesn't just get a $15,000 credit for the amount they wrote down, they get a credit for the whole $500,000—the full value of the loan. That method of calculating credits—buried in the fine print—could end up cutting by more than half the overall value of the $8.5 billion settlement.

Another way to hide the ball is to omit an upfront determination and disclosure of whether the settlement will be tax deductible. Several years ago, the Justice Department announced a $385 million settlement with Fresenius Medical Care for allegedly defrauding Medicare and other health programs for years. When the agreement was originally announced, the Justice Department touted the sticker price as the agency's largest civil recovery to date in a health care fraud case. But the DOJ didn't say a word about the tax treatment. The agency's failure to even consider that issue was a very costly mistake. By the time the company finished claiming all of its tax deductions from the settlement, it ended up paying $100 million less than originally advertised. In other words, the taxpayers picked up more than a quarter of the tab.

It takes a lot of digging around to uncover these unflattering details, but at least it was possible to do so in these cases because of public information about these two agreements. For settlements that are kept confidential, the public is completely in the dark.

Just last year, Wells Fargo agreed to pay the Federal Housing Finance Agency $335 million for allegedly fraudulent sales of mortgage-backed securities to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. That is about 6 percent of what JPMorgan paid in a public settlement with FHFA to address very similar claims. So in what ways did the actions of Wells Fargo differ from those of JPMorgan? We will never know, because the JPMorgan settlement is public, but the much smaller Wells Fargo settlement is confidential.

The American people deserve better. Government enforcement agencies work for us, not for the companies they regulate. Agencies should not be able to cut bad deals and then hide behind their embarrassing details. The public deserves to know what is going on.

The Truth in Settlements Act requires transparency. It requires agencies making public statements about their settlements to include explanations of how companies get credits and whether the wrongdoers will be eligible for tax breaks for their settlement payments. The bill also requires agencies to post text and basic information about their settlements online. And while the legislation permits confidential settlements, it requires agencies to disclose how frequently they are invoking confidentiality and to explain their reasons for doing so.

If we expect government agencies to hold companies accountable for breaking the law, then we, the public, must be able to hold agencies accountable for enforcing the law. We can't do that if we are kept in the dark. The Truth in Settlements Act shines a light on these agency decisions, and it gives the American people a chance to hold

agencies accountable for fairly and effectively enforcing our laws. I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this bill.

Thank you, Mr. President. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONGRATULATING GREG MADDUX

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Republican leader and I don't agree on everything, but we do agree on some. There is one thing no one can dispute we agree on, and that is our love of baseball. We both love baseball season. It gives us an opportunity, when we go home after working here, to turn on the TV and watch a few innings of a baseball game.

For some people, baseball is a very slow, boring opportunity to watch people moving slowly, but Senator MCCONNELL and I love it. We talk about baseball. We love the Nationals. He and I have great affection for the Nationals because of Bryce Harper, a Las Vegas athlete.

The reason I mention that is because today, Nevada's greatest baseball hero—in fact, one of the greatest baseball heroes not of Nevada but of all time—was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Greg Maddux is an extremely nice man—a man of humility. I have gone out to dinner with him and his lovely wife a few times. I know his brother well, who was also a professional baseball player, and he would be the first to say when he was playing baseball and today about how average he was: I am not a great athlete. But he is one of the best of all time.

He started his career with the Chicago Cubs and went on to win 355 professional Major League Baseball games and four consecutive Cy Young awards. Today he received almost 98 percent of all votes cast—the second highest tally in the history of Hall of Fame voting.

So I congratulate this good man on the honor he received so deservedly—I repeat, a man of humility; a man who had probably the greatest control in the history of baseball of being able to throw a ball to the spot he wanted. He is not a big man. That is an understatement. He is not a big man, but he was precise in where he could throw that baseball.

I have such fond memories of Greg Maddux. The last election was kind of a hard election for me. So I called Greg. I called him on his cell phone. I said: Greg, I want you to be a Republican for Reid. Would you do that?

He said: I will do that.

I said: What are you doing?

He said: I am playing golf.

I said: Can you break 80?

And he said: If you leave me alone, I can break 70.

Greg Maddux is a fine man. I have great affection for him and his family. I am sure this is one thing that Senator MCCONNELL and I agree on.

This afternoon, the Republican leader came to the floor to complain about the minority's ability to offer amendments, in particular, to offer amendments on the 3-month extension of the legislation now before this body. It is interesting that during the Republican leader's remarks there wasn't a word uttered about jobs, about unemployment compensation, or the economy—not a word.

So it is very clear what went on here today with my Republican colleagues. Remember, the Republican leader came and Republican Senators came and sat here with him. It is impossible for my Republican colleagues to explain to the American people their callous opposition to the plight of the 1.3 million Americans. About 20,000 of them live in Nevada.

Two very fine Senators on a bipartisan basis have this legislation before this body: JACK REED of Rhode Island—and Rhode Island is tied, as we speak, with Nevada for the highest unemployment rate in the country—and the other Senator is my friend, the Republican Senator from Nevada, the junior Senator from Nevada DEAN HELLER. It is an important move they made on behalf of their States and the American people.

Republicans, though, do not want to talk about the problems facing the middle class, as evidenced by what went on this afternoon. They do not want to talk—these Republicans—about the solutions to falling wages and job shortages.

In America today, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer and the middle class is being squeezed. During the last 30 years, the top 1 percent's wealth and income has increased by triple numbers—triple. But what has happened to the middle class during that same 30 years? Their wages have gone down 10 percent—tripling to going down 10 percent.

So they do not want to talk about this, and that is why they plan to vote against an extension of these emergency unemployment insurance benefits. The vast majority of them voted to not even let us get on the bill and have a debate, but a few stepped forward and said: No, we should have a debate on this, and a debate we are having.

My Republican colleagues are looking for a distraction, a diversion, a phony process argument to steal attention away from their unconscionable stand on the issues that matter most to the middle class.

This issue of unemployment insurance was not developed by some political science professor from Harvard or Yale or Stanford. It is something to help people who are in desperate shape.

I repeat, they are looking for a distraction, a process argument to steal attention away from their unconscionable stand on the issues that matter most to the middle class. You have to give them credit, they are doing their best to divert attention away from this issue. This is opposition—and it is coldhearted—to extending unemployment benefits. It is a very tough position to defend, especially when Republicans around America support what HELLER and REED of Rhode Island are trying to do. Democrats support it, Independents, but Republicans in Congress do not and they have said so.

The Republicans' complaint that the majority never allows the minority to offer amendments is false. It is not true. It is another diversion.

During my tenure as majority leader—there has been volumes of stuff written about the obstruction we have had with my Republican colleagues during the last 5 years with the Obama administration. Think of the obstruction that took place when Barack Obama decided to run for reelection.

That was a little interesting because the Republican leader said his No. 1 goal as a Senator and the leader of the Republicans was to make sure he was not reelected. He fell real short on that because he was reelected overwhelmingly. So during that period of time: obstruction, obstruction, obstruction, obstruction, and after he was reelected it continued.

During my tenure as majority leader, the Senate has voted on minority amendments at a higher rate than it did during either of my Republican predecessors—and the largest rate of minority amendments probably in the history of the Senate. But let's just talk about Republican Leader Frist and Republican Leader Trent Lott—both friends of mine. I still am in touch with them all the time. They are people I will always admire and have great respect for.

Since I have been leader, 7 out of 10 amendments on which the Senate has voted have been Republican amendments. Under Senator Frist's leadership, certainly there were not that many, I will tell you that, that were offered by the minority. Under Senator Lott's leadership, only 54 percent of the amendments considered by the Senate were offered by the minority.

During my leadership of the 111th Congress, minority amendments represented a greater share of all amendment votes than during any single Congress during either Leader Frist's or Leader Lott's tenure. Facts.

In fact, often the minority is prevented from offering amendments. Why? Their own Senators will not allow amendments. How many times has the Presiding Officer and others come to this floor and wanted to offer an amendment—objection on the other side because they want to offer an amendment that has nothing to do with anything we are debating on the floor at a given time.

Last year just a handful of Republican Senators held up any legislation. The best example was the legislation

we tried to do dealing with energy efficiency. Energy efficiency. We could not get it done because of Republican obstruction.

Often a particular Republican will prevent any Senator from offering an amendment unless he gets a vote on what he wants voted on first—a little unusual.

So let's not revise history. Let's talk about history as I know it and as the books report how we should know it, what the facts are in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

We know how under my friend the Republican leader's leadership there has been obstruction in the way of the filibusters. Filibuster is not some right that was placed in the Constitution. It is a privilege that was granted under the Senate rules, and that has been abused big time.

Their obstruction has continued to be unprecedented over the last 5 years. Half of all filibusters waged in the history of the country—that is 230-plus years—half of them have been waged against President Obama's nominations—half of them in 5 years compared to 230 years.

Last year Republicans mounted the first ever filibuster of a Secretary of Defense—by the way, a former Republican Senator. They even filibustered him.

I understand Republicans do not want to talk about how we can create jobs, how we can boost the economy or any of the other issues that matter most to the middle class. I understand that Republicans are struggling to explain turning their backs on 1.3 million unemployed Americans. But I do wish they would stop trying to justify their opposition to helping Americans in need with false claims and distortions of the truth.

Finally, as I leave the floor, I prefer not to pay for this emergency situation where we have long-term unemployed. This is an emergency, and it should be considered accordingly and should not be paid for in the normal course around here.

We believe in reducing the debt. In the Senate Chamber with me now is someone whom I had the pleasure of appointing to the Bowles-Simpson Commission, the senior Senator from the State of Illinois, the assistant majority leader. He worked hard. We have not followed Bowles-Simpson as a bible, but it certainly has been a guide we have followed. While we could have done better, we have done pretty good. We are approaching having reduced the debt by some $3 trillion right now as we speak. We could reduce it another $1 trillion if we could get comprehensive immigration reform done.

The goal of Bowles-Simpson was $4 trillion. So when I say this is something that has not been paid for ordinarily in the past, that is true, but that does not take away from the fact that we all are going to continue to work on this side of the aisle to reduce the debt.

But I do hear that some of my Republican colleagues want to pay for this. I disagree with them, but that is what they want to do. So far all we have heard from Republicans' pay-fors is this: take a big whack out of ObamaCare. There are 9 million people—approaching 10 million now—who benefit from ObamaCare. So they want to damage every one of those 9-plus million people. Or they have another one: go after children—children—with the child tax credit. Those are their two pay-fors at this point—a little scary, I would think.

So I am waiting, we are waiting for Republican suggestions on how to pay for a full-year extension of unemployment insurance. Let's hear from them how they want to pay for it. They say they want to pay for it. Let's hear what they want to do.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to thank the majority leader for his comments, and I will be very brief because I know the Senator from Iowa has a statement he wants to make.

Let me just say that the statement made on the floor earlier this afternoon by the Republican leader never once addressed the issue pending before the Senate. Pending before the Senate is an emergency unemployment insurance bill that will provide benefits to 1.3 million Americans who are out of work and for 8 days now have been receiving no assistance whatsoever. Imagine the struggles they are facing.

That is why we called this bill first when we returned from our holiday recess. We consider it a priority. We were heartened yesterday when six Republicans joined us to move this bill forward. It gave us hope that we were going to do something to get this done in a timely way to help a lot of deserving people all across the United States.

We hoped today, when the Republican leader from Kentucky came to the floor, that he would address the urgency and necessity of this bill. He did not. As Senator REID has said, he wanted to talk about the Senate rules.

The Senate rules are important, make no mistake. But they are certainly not as important as providing essential benefits, essential relief and help to 1.3 million unemployed Americans—people who are trying to pay their utility bills, avoid eviction, put gas in the car, and go out and find a job. That is a higher priority, and I had hoped the Republican leader would address it. Instead, he wants to talk about the rules.

What the Senator from Nevada, our majority leader, has said is a matter of record. It is still amazing to consider this: Nearly half of all the filibusters waged on nominations in the history of the United States of America have been waged under the leadership of Republican Senator MCCONNELL during the Obama Presidency—nearly half. In the history of the United States, 168 nominees have been filibustered; 82 occurred under the leadership of the Republican Senator from Kentucky during the Obama administration.

In the history of the United States, 23 district court nominees have been filibustered—in our entire history. Twenty have been filibustered under the leadership of the Republican Senator from Kentucky during the Obama administration—20 out of 23. Nearly half of all the nominations that have been filibustered: under this Senate Republican leadership. Is there any wonder why the rules needed to be changed?

We look at the wait time of those who finally get out of committee and sit on the calendar waiting indefinitely. It breaks my heart to think of the fine women and men who are willing to offer their lives in public service, go through extensive background checks, make the necessary personal sacrifices, and languish on our calendar for no earthly reason.

In the end many of them have been approved with overwhelming votes, and yet they have been subjected to these incessant Republican filibusters. The case involving our colleague, Congressman Mel Watt of North Carolina, is one of the most egregious. It is the first time, I believe, since 1843 that a sitting Member of Congress has faced a filibuster in the Senate when appointed to a Presidential nomination. Finally, we broke that after the rules change. I was heartened to see that Congressman Watt was sworn in yesterday to this position dealing with America's housing challenges.

But that was an example of an outrageous filibuster against a colleague, a fellow Member of Congress, a Member of the House of Representatives. The coup de grace, of course, was the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, where we offered three well-qualified nominees to fill obvious vacancies on that Court, and they were stopped by the Republican filibusters, one after the other without any complaint about their qualifications, well qualified for this position to serve on the DC Circuit Court.

It was not until Senator REID lead us in changing the Senate rules that we finally found this necessary relief. It is time for us to return to the issue at hand. Pending before the Senate is emergency unemployment benefits for 1.3 million Americans. As important as a rules debate may be to some in this Chamber, there is nothing more important than to deal with this in a timely way. I hope the Republicans will take the advice of the leader that he gave at the end of his remarks, produce for us their pay-for, if that is the course that they want to follow, for us to pay for those unemployment benefits for the coming year. We are waiting for their response. In the meantime, I hope that some will come forward and join us in what has traditionally been a bipartisan effort to help those in America seeking work.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, first I want to thank our leader and our assistant leader for their great leadership and for their eloquence here on the floor today and for correctly stating what the issue is. It is not rules; it is justice. I am going to speak about that myself.

Mr. President, 50 years ago today, President Lyndon Johnson came before Congress and spoke these bold words: ''This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America.''

Lyndon Johnson, as we all know, was born and raised in stark poverty in the Texas hill country, coming of age during the Great Depression. From hard personal experience, he understood how poor schools, empty stomachs, and bad health make a mockery of America's promise of equal opportunity for all.

When President Johnson delivered that historic State of the Union address, our Nation was enjoying unprecedented post-war prosperity. We had become, in John Kenneth Galbraith's famous words, the ''affluent society.'' However, in the midst of this Nation of prosperity and plenty, there was also ''the other America'' as author Michael Harrington told us.

Fully one-fifth of our population was trapped in poverty. Across Appalachia, in urban ghettos, in large swaths of rural America, millions of American children were being raised in shacks and slums, going to bed hungry, attending grossly substandard schools. Worse, experts described this poverty as ''intractable.'' Experts warned that despite the Nation's overall prosperity, poverty was growing more widespread, because as one study put it, the poor were ''not part of the economic structure.''

A report then by the President's Council of Economic Advisors asserted that, ''future economic growth alone will provide relatively few escapes from poverty.'' Economic growth alone, they said, will not solve the issue of poverty. Of course, I must add, it is very much the same today. Economic growth alone will provide few escapes from poverty for people today if 95 percent of income gains are going to the top 1 percent, and if the rewards of productivity gains go to shareholders and not to the workers.

So it was in this context that President Johnson—keep if mind, less than 2 months after he assumed the office after the terrible assassination of President Kennedy. It was in this context that he summoned the Nation so that the unconditional war on poverty could be waged.

For LBJ, this was both an economic challenge and a profound moral challenge. It was about doing justice. In his speech to Congress he said:

> Very often a lack of jobs and money is not the cause of poverty but the symptom. The cause may lie deeper, in our failure to give our fellow citizens a fair chance to develop their own capacities and a lack of education and training and a lack of medical care and housing, and a lack of decent communities in which to live and bring up their children.

President Johnson continued:

> Our chief weapons will be better schools and better health and better homes and better training and better job opportunities to help more Americans, especially young Americans, to escape from squalor and misery and unemployment rolls, where other citizens help to carry them.

In the months that followed this State of the Union address, President Johnson proposed specific programs to attack poverty and inequality. He articulated his broader vision for what he called a Great Society. There is no better place to appreciate the boldness and accomplishment of this era than at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum in Austin, TX.

My favorite part is a room—I have been there several times—commemorating the Great Society with plaques and signing pens all along the wall, listing the incredible array of legislation that President Johnson had passed into law. Listen to these: The great Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, Job Corps, VISTA, Upward Bound, the Food Stamp Program, legal services for the poor, the Community Action Program, community health centers, Head Start, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Higher Education Act, Medicare, Medicaid, the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, Public Broadcasting, the National Mass Transportation Act, the Cigarette Labeling Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Wilderness Act.

It takes your breath away, to think about all that was done. These Great Society programs have defined the modern United States of America as a compassionate, inclusive society, a genuine opportunity society where everyone can contribute their talents and abilities.

Last month, on December 4, in his landmark speech on inequality, President Obama noted that these and other initiatives have helped to reduce the poverty rate by 40 percent since the 1960s—have helped reduce the poverty rate by 40 percent since the 1960s. President Obama said: ''These endeavors didn't just make us a better country, they reaffirmed that we are a great country.''

However, on this 50th anniversary of President Johnson's great address to Congress, I must acknowledge that there are some who profoundly disagree with this assessment on the war on poverty and the Great Society. They insist it was a great failure. Indeed, I have heard this claim from many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle since I first came to Congress in 1975. This supposed ''failure'' of the war on poverty, this failure of the Great Society, has indeed become almost an article of faith and dogma among conservatives. It is truly the triumph of belief over reality.

As President Reagan said on May 9, 1983, ''The great expansion of government programs that took place under the aegis of the Great Society coincided with an end to economic progress for America's poor people.''

Wow. That is quite an assertion by President Reagan. So allow me, on this 50th anniversary, to take a few minutes to point out many of the ''failures'' of the war on poverty and the Great Society. Perhaps a good place to start is by pointing out the ''failure'' of Medicare. At the bill signing ceremony for the Social Security Amendments Act on July 30 of 1965, President Johnson enrolled former President Harry Truman as the first Medicare beneficiary and presented him with the first Medicare card.

These days we talk about life after 65 as the golden years. I tell you, life after 65 used to be the nightmare years, with tens of millions of Americans unable to afford even basic medical care, condemned to live out their senior years in the misery of untreated or poorly treated illnesses.

In 1959 the poverty rate among older Americans was 35 percent. Since the Great Society programs started, the poverty rate among seniors has fallen by nearly two-thirds. What a failure. What a failure. Medicare is especially personal to me. I remember my father, who was then in his late 70s, and never had access to any regular health care in his life. My father only had a sixth-grade education, worked in coal mines most of his life, and suffered from what they then called ''coal-miners lung.'' They always called it ''coal-miners lung.''

He would get sick all the time. If it were not for the compassion and the generosity of the Sisters of Mercy who would take care of him when he got sick and nurse him back to health, I do not know what would have happened to him. But I can remember, coming home from the military on military leave in late 1965, and my father had his Medicare card.

For the first time in his life, for the first time in his life—and now he was approaching almost 80 years of age—he could go see a doctor without paying. Without taking charity. It gave him the dignity and the security of knowing that he could see a doctor if he needed to.

The Great Society also gave birth to community health centers, as long as I am talking about health care. Community health centers provided essential medical care to the poor. The first two community health centers were opened in 1964, one in Boston, MA, and one in rural Mississippi.

This model of providing basic health services to the uninsured and underserved was an enormous success. Listen to this. From that modest beginning of two in 1964, community health centers have expanded to include more than 1,200 community health centers in more than 9,000 locations serving more than 22 million patients annually. What a failure. What a failure.

I guess another failure of the Great Society was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We call it ESEA. Since Brown versus Board of Education, the decision of the Supreme Court in the mid 1950s, Americans acknowledged that we had two school systems, one for the middle class and the well off and a grossly inferior one for the poor.

ESEA said that all children, regardless of their background and their circumstances at birth, can learn, and the Federal Government will provide resources to help create equity—equity among our schools.

Educating children of poverty will always be challenging. We still have large achievement gaps that still persist. But Title I assistance to America's neediest schools has made a dramatic difference for the good of millions of low-income children.

If it has been such a great failure, I would ask any Senator who wants to repeal Title I and defund it, please step forward. Speak up here on the Senate floor.

Will any Senator who wants to do away with title I and defund it please step forward and speak up? I doubt there will be any takers.

What about the failure of the Higher Education Act? In 1965, it was rare for young people from disadvantaged and low-income backgrounds to go to college. So President Johnson and Congress passed the Higher Education Act, creating need-based grants and loans with reduced interest rates.

Today, Pell grants, created in the later version of the Higher Education Act, help more than 9 million low-income students gain access to higher education. The Higher Education Act has swung open the doors to college for countless Americans, creating new opportunities and access to the American dream.

Again, I suppose some see this as another failure, another government handout that prevents people from standing on their own two feet. Decide for yourself if vastly expanding access to higher education constitutes a failure.

But before we do, talk to a lower income student, striving to become a doctor, the first in her family to go to college, thanks to the TRIO Programs, Upward Bound, thanks to Pell grants, thanks to low-interest college loans. Ask her if she feels as though she is an undeserving taker, unwilling to stand on her own two feet.

In August of 1964, again only a few months after declaring the war on poverty, Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Food Stamp Act. Prior to that act, hunger and malnutrition were shockingly widespread in America, particularly in our rural areas and urban ghettos. Today we still have millions of food-insecure people in America, but thanks to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the new name for the food stamp program, abject hunger in America is rare. Tens of millions of Americans, more than half of them children, are ensured a basic nutritional minimum.

Is this another failure, food stamps? Apparently many Members of this body think so. In June of 2012, 33 Republican Senators voted to block grant the food stamp program and slash the funding by over $300 billion over 10 years.

I ask Senators who voted for those cuts, have you ever talked to a first grader who is finally able to concentrate in class because she had a breakfast paid for by food stamps? Has anyone asked her whether she would prefer to tough it out without a meal to start the day?

In 1965, Lyndon Johnson's Office of Economic Opportunity created 269 local Legal Services offices across the country, providing legal assistance to low-income Americans. This later evolved into the Legal Services Corporation.

As a proud former Legal Aid lawyer myself, I know firsthand what a difference this can make in so many circumstances for a struggling family facing foreclosure, a battered woman trying to leave an abusive marriage, a senior citizen victimized by a financial scam. I know that without access to an attorney the poor are often powerless against the injustices they suffer.

Is the dedicated work of Legal Aid attorneys a failure? I vigorously disagree. The American Bar Association vigorously disagrees. It strongly supports Legal Services.

Every Federal judge and Supreme Court Justice, in their oath of office, swears to ''administer justice without respect to persons, and do equal right to the poor and to the rich''—to do equal right to the poor and to the rich. It is Legal Services, and Legal Services lawyers, who helped to translate that ideal into a reality for poor people in courtrooms all over America.

Our frontline soldiers in the war on poverty are the dedicated professionals and volunteers in Community Action Agencies, another Great Society program. These are funded by the Federal Community Services Block Grant. In 2012, these locally driven agencies served nearly 19 million low-income Americans, including more than 5 million children, more than 2 million people with disabilities, and 2.5 million seniors served by community action agencies.

These agencies equip people with skills to return to work. They provide food, clothing, other emergency assistance. They administer Head Start Programs, other preschool programs, and do a lot more.

People can decide if the Community Action Program, Community Action Agency, and Community Services Block Grant have been a failure. But before they do, drop in on a Community Action Agency in your State. See for yourself the amazing work they do in relieving poverty and helping people to escape.

Speak to members of a local Community Action Agency board and people will find that they are local business people, bankers, lawyers, as well as people who receive the services. They will tell you how these agencies do so much with so little, performing indispensable services in their communities. Talk to them.

I can spend hours citing some other Great Society initiatives, but let me mention just one more: the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Prior to that act, African Americans faced open, legalized discrimination and segregation. We had our own American version of apartheid. In many parts of our country, including in Washington, DC, African Americans could not eat at the same lunch counter with Whites. They could not use the same bathrooms, the same swimming pools, the same water fountains. They literally were consigned to the back of the bus.

Because of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, those Jim Crow laws and practices were ended in the United States of America. It became illegal to discriminate based on race, color, religion, gender, or national origin. Some apparently call that a failure—one of the Great Society's many ''failures.''

You may decide for yourself whether America is better off today, whether we are better as a society, stronger as a nation, because we did away with segregation. You decide.

President Reagan, in his State of the Union Address in 1988, said that the Great Society ''declared war on poverty, and poverty won.'' It was one of President Reagan's catchy one-liners. But with all due respect to President Reagan, it simply is not historically accurate, not even close. From the time President Johnson took office in 1963, until 1970, as the full impact of the Great Society programs began to be felt, the number of Americans living below the poverty line dropped from 22.2 percent to 12.6 percent—almost cut it in half. The poverty rate for African Americans fell from 55 percent in 1960 to 27 percent in 1968. The poverty rate among the elderly, as I said earlier, fell by over two-thirds.

The great shame is that this progress, this war on poverty of the Great Society, was cut short. The war on poverty gave way to the war in Vietnam. Then it gave way in retrenchment later on in later administrations, which cared less about giving a hand up to the poor than about giving handouts to the rich in the form of giant tax breaks and other advantages. What was started as a percolate-up economy under the Great Society became a trickle-down economic society under later administrations.

On this 50th anniversary of President Johnson's great address to Congress, let me state unequivocally and factually—historically factually—the Great Society has been a historic success.

However, I must note that 50 years later our Nation confronts a new set of economic challenges, societal challenges, challenges that are every bit as

dangerous to our democracy, every bit as daunting and intractable as those confronted by President Johnson and the Congresses of his time.

Our economy is still struggling to recover from the great recession. The sluggish recovery has left us with chronic unemployment and a middle class in crisis. Social mobility, the ability to work your way up the economic ladder, is now lower in the United States than in Europe. For the vast majority of American workers, incomes have been stagnant for decades, but the rich have grown fabulously richer. Think about this: Since the official end of the great recession in 2009, 95 percent of income gains in the United States have gone to the wealthiest 1 percent in the last 5 years—95 percent of income gains have gone to the wealthiest 1 percent.

Unlike President Johnson's day, today it is not only the poor who are at risk, our great middle class is endangered. Millions of formerly middle-class Americans have lost their jobs, their homes, their savings, their hopes for a decent retirement. For too many of our citizens, the American dream has become hopelessly out of reach. This is the crisis. This is the challenge of our day.

Are we rising to meet this challenge as previous generations of Americans have done? No, I am afraid we are not. Inside the Washington bubble, too many of our political leaders have persuaded themselves that the biggest issue of the day is the budget deficit. Ignoring chronic unemployment and a struggling economy, this 113th Congress and the previous Congress pursued policies of relentless austerity, slashing budgets, defunding research and investment, destroying jobs, and even refusing to extend Federal unemployment benefits for long-term jobless, 1.3 million of whom lost their last lifeline of support only 3 days after Christmas.

I am disturbed by the apparent shift of attitude by many elected leaders toward the ordinary people who do the hard day-in and day-out work that makes our country strong. I said it before, and I say it again. We are seeing an attitude of harshness. We used to agree that if someone worked hard and played by the rules, they should be able to earn enough to support their families, keep a roof over their heads, put some money away for a rainy day, and have a secure environment. We used to agree that if someone loses their job through no fault of their own—especially at a time of chronic unemployment—they should have some support when they are looking for new work. We used to agree on both sides of the aisle that no child in this country should go to bed hungry at night. But in recent years these fundamental principles, values, and agreements have come under attack in our public discourse. For instance, recently on a Sunday talk show, the junior Senator from Kentucky said it would be a ''disservice''—a ''disservice''—to the long-term jobless to extend Federal unemployment insurance. I have his exact words right here. Senator PAUL said:

> When you allow people to be on unemployment insurance for 99 weeks, you're causing them to become part of this perpetual unemployed group in our economy. And while it seems good, it actually does a disservice to the people you're trying to help.

When there are three people looking for every job; when in some areas, some States, unemployment is even worse than that, you would cut off their long-term unemployment insurance? Where are they going to get a job? Maybe what the Senator doesn't understand is that before you can even get unemployment benefits, you have to be actively looking for work. A disservice?

I guess our new attitude is, tough luck. You are on your own. If you struggle, even if you face insurmountable challenges, well, it is your own fault. Tough luck. You are on your own. If you are a kid born into poverty or a single parent working for minimum wage, struggling to pay the bills and put food on the table, tough luck. You are on your own. If you are a 55-year-old worker who lost her job due to outsourcing or technological change, tough luck. You are on your own. If you are a person with a significant disability struggling to find work and independence and dignity, tough luck. You are on your own.

Mr. President, there is a harshness among too many in powerful positions toward those Americans who have tough lives, who are ill-educated or marginally employed or who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own—a harshness among too many people in powerful positions toward these Americans. President Johnson would rebuke this harshness and this callousness, as he said in remarks 3 months after his war-on-poverty speech. Listen to what President Johnson said:

> God will judge his children not by their prayers and their pretensions, but by their mercy to the poor and their understanding of the weak. I tremble for our people if at the time of our greatest prosperity we turn our back on the moral obligations of our deepest faith.

That was President Johnson.

So today, 50 years later, I remind my colleagues that we are still a nation of great prosperity. We are the wealthiest Nation in the world. We are the wealthiest Nation ever in the history of the world. Our problem is this prosperity and wealth is concentrated at the very top. The workers who have created it are not getting their fair share. So on this 50th anniversary of President Johnson's war-on-poverty address, I cannot agree with those who say the budget deficit is our No. 1 priority. I am concerned about far more urgent and compelling deficits: the deficit of jobs and opportunity, the deficit of research and investment, the deficit of early education for all our children, the deficit of basic human understanding and empathy for those in the shadows of life.

I am also concerned about the deficit of imagination today in Washington. I am concerned by our failure to confront today's economic challenges with the boldness and the vision that earlier generations of Americans summoned in times of national challenge. Indeed, our Republican friends reject the very possibility that the Federal Government can act to spur economic growth and create good middle-class jobs. This is their ideological position, and they are sticking to it. But this flies in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary across our Nation's history.

One can go back to President Lincoln, who insisted that every American has a ''right to rise.'' To that end, he created the land-grant college system, provided for the transcontinental railroad, and established the Department of Agriculture with the mission of helping farmers boost their production and income and raise their standard of living.

President Teddy Roosevelt fought for safe workplaces, the 8-hour workday, and busting up the trusts that were strangling opportunity for ordinary Americans.

Think of Franklin Delano Roosevelt who put to work millions of unemployed Americans, including my father, in the Works Project Administration, building roads and dams and bridges and schools, many of which still exist today. Franklin Roosevelt created Social Security to end the scourge of poverty in old age.

Think of President Eisenhower, who championed investment in our infrastructure, beginning with the Interstate Highway System, which has expanded commerce and opportunity for nearly six decades now.

As we are doing today, let's pay tribute to one of our greatest Presidents, Lyndon Baines Johnson, and the enormous achievements of his war on poverty and the Great Society.

Mr. President, I have not come to the floor today just to look back fondly and nostalgically or to try to correct the record about the achievements of the Great Society. I am here at the beginning of this legislative year to urge my colleagues to look with fresh eyes at the urgent economic and societal challenges confronting the American people today. We need to think more broadly and with more ambitious vision about how we in Congress can come together to create a greater society, an America of greater opportunity, greater economic mobility, greater fairness. We need to create what I call a new America.

Let's dare to imagine a new America where every child has access to quality early learning.

Let's dare to imagine public investments to create a truly 21st-century infrastructure, modernizing our roads, our bridges, ports, and canals, building high-speed rail systems from Maine to Miami and Seattle to San Diego—a new infrastructure for a new America.

Let's dare to imagine retrofitting all of our buildings to make them energy

efficient, making wind, solar, geothermal, and other renewables the main sources of our energy—yes, a renewable energy basis for a new America.

Let's dare to imagine doubling our investment in the National Institutes of Health, making possible a real war on cancer and Alzheimer's and other devastating diseases. Think of that—a cancer-free, Alzheimer's-free new America.

Let's dare to imagine a true health care system where wellness and prevention and public health are the first priority, keeping people healthy in the first place in this new America.

Let's dare to imagine a new retirement system where every worker builds a private pension that can't be touched until they retire and a stronger Social Security System—solvent, secure—with increased benefits for the next 50 years. Think of it—a secure retirement for every citizen in this new America.

These are the big challenges we in Congress should be addressing.

I know that by all means there are issues demanding our immediate attention—again, beginning with the need to extend Federal unemployment insurance for the long-term jobless. We will be voting on that motion to proceed within the hour. As I said earlier, some 1.3 million Americans were cut off just a couple of weeks ago. Another 3.6 million Americans will be cut off over the course of 2014. These benefits are not much, but they make a critical difference for those with no other lifeline. So this is an immediate concern and must be our immediate priority in these initial days of this session.

In addition, the Senate will soon take up my bill to raise the minimum wage to $10.10 an hour and to link it to future cost-of-living increases. Get this: Since the minimum wage peaked in 1968 as part of the Great Society, it has lost one-third of its buying power. So if you were making the minimum wage in 1968 compared to what you are making today, you could have bought one-third more than you can buy today.

Over the decades, the minimum wage has become a poverty wage. Think about that. People go to work every day. They work hard, sometimes at two jobs, and they are still below the poverty line. No person in America who puts in a full day's work ought to have an income below the poverty line.

These two are the immediate moral and economic issues we need to address. Yes, I say moral and economic issues. Today we do confront huge economic challenges. As Americans, we pride ourselves on our robust free-market system. Some say the unfettered free marketplace will solve all our problems. Just let it go. They glorify the ideas of Ayn Rand and academic theorists who say that greed is good, extremes of inequality are necessary, and poverty is deserved, which reminds me of the words of the philosopher Bertrand Russell nearly a century ago. He said:

> The modern conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy—that is, the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness.

I remind my colleagues that it is precisely the unrestrained, often runamok free marketplace that has created so many of the problems we face today. Financial and real estate bubbles. Who suffered because of that? Ordinary Americans. Chronic unemployment. Who is suffering? Ordinary Americans. Stagnant wages. Who is suffering? Ordinary Americans. Gaping income inequality. Who is suffering? Not the few at the top. Disappearing pensions. Who is suffering? Ordinary working Americans. On and on.

Like a busy highway system, our free marketplace only really works for all when all the players obey essential rules of the road—rules put in place by government to avoid crashes and bubbles, to rein in wasteful and dishonest money manipulators, and, yes, to provide for social and economic justice. And there are some things—big national undertakings—that the private sector simply is not capable of doing.

At critical junctures going back to the beginning of our Republic, Congresses and Presidents have acted decisively to spur economic growth, foster innovation, and help create jobs. No question, that is where we are falling short today.

Members of Congress and elected officials across America can learn from the successes of the war on poverty and the Great Society. We need a new generation of leaders with Lyndon Johnson's passionate commitment to improving education, expanding opportunity, and fighting inequality and discrimination. As I said, we need to come together to create a greater society, a new America. We need to act with boldness and vision.

The war on poverty and the Great Society initiatives have defined the modern United States of America as a compassionate, inclusive society, a genuine opportunity society where everyone can contribute their talents and abilities. We see the Great Society all around us today—in cleaner air and cleaner water, young people from poor backgrounds attending college, seniors and poor people who have access to decent medical care, and people of color exercising their right to vote and to live in the neighborhoods of their choice.

We see the great society in Head Start Programs, quality public schools, vocational education programs, college grants and loans, all those rungs on the ladder of opportunity which put the American dream in reach of every citizen, even those from humble, hardscrabble backgrounds like Lyndon Johnson himself.

We might notice I said a ladder of opportunity. I didn't say an escalator. I think a lot of times my conservative friends say we just want to give everything to everybody, give everybody a free ride. I always talk about the ladder of opportunity. I don't talk about an escalator. An escalator is a free ride. With a ladder you still have to assert energy and initiative to get up. But there is one thing necessary: The rungs have to be there on that ladder, many of them put there by government and society acting together, things like affordable child care programs, early learning, quality of public schools, Pell grants, job training, and on and on. They provide those rungs on that ladder, and sometimes people fall off the ladder through no fault of their own. They lose their job, they become disabled or they contract a terrible illness. In those cases, it is the moral duty of government and society working collectively to provide a hand back up. Things like, yes, unemployment insurance, disability insurance, job training, and many others.

Up until 1990, we looked around America and we saw that no matter how hard they tried, they could never climb that ladder of opportunity. These were Americans with disabilities. So in 1990 we passed the Americans with Disabilities Act. Again, we built a ramp of opportunity. We didn't build a moving walkway; that is a free ride. I have often pointed out, not one dime in the Americans with Disabilities Act goes to a person with disabilities. What we did is we broke down the barriers. We built the ramps to accessible buses and trains, provided accessible workplaces, widened doors in accessible bathrooms. We broke down the barriers so people with disabilities could exert their own energy and initiative to get up that ramp.

Like every great leader in our Nation's history, Lyndon Baines Johnson brought us a giant step closer to achieving our highest ideals as a people. He fought passionately for social and economic justice for all Americans. He fought to put the American dream within reach of every citizen, and he saw this as a moral imperative. That is why I consider him one of our greatest Presidents. This is the legacy we salute today. This is the lesson we should learn as we move forward in this country. As we move from this 50th anniversary of President Johnson's great address to Congress, it is this spirit of ambitious public purpose that we should strive to emulate in the legislative year ahead and the legislative years to come.

Fifty years ago today, Lyndon Johnson spoke to our deepest moral underpinnings. He didn't just couch it in terms of an economic solution. It was justice. It was making sure the American dream really was alive for all. We can't in our time become small-minded, looking upon just what is good for today or what are the economics of things. We have to think about it in terms of what our commitment is for moral, economic, and social justice for all Americans. That was the lesson of President Lyndon Johnson. That is

what we should take from this 50th anniversary.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, when the history books are written about those who fought hardest against poverty, who stood up for those with no voice, with very little power and an increasingly unfair economy, LBJ and his war on poverty will be a few chapters in that book. Senator TOM HARKIN will occupy a pretty big place in that story as well. I salute him for spending the time to talk about this long fight on poverty this country has waged, and still needs to wage, and salute the role he has played. It is an inspiration to many of us who have sought to try to stand in his shoes and in his place.

I wish to talk about the same subject, because over the holidays I had the chance to spend a day in New Haven, CT, with a 40-year-old homeless man who up until last spring had been employed for the better part of the last 20 years. But as has happened to millions of Americans over the last several years, this man—who I will call for today's purposes Nick—lost his job.

Nick has had it tough his whole life. His father was a drug addict who got Nick addicted to crack when he was 13 years old. He was born into a cycle of drug use and violence and poverty that is far too prevalent in places like New Haven and Bridgeport and cities across this country. But despite the odds stacked against him, Nick graduated from high school, he built a career for himself around sales. Now, after 20 years of working and 40 years of fighting the odds, Nick for the first time in his life is homeless.

So I spent the day with Nick, seeking shelter from the cold, using the public library to apply for jobs, attending meetings that have helped keep him clean and sober. Aside from receiving the support he needs for his health issues, Nick spent most of that day just looking for work. He wants to work. He desperately wants to get back on the job, and he is hopeful that one day he will find work soon. But he is caught right now in this vicious downward spiral of homelessness. He can't find a job without a home. He fills out dozens of job applications, but with his address being a homeless shelter, he doesn't compete very well with other applicants. But of course, as Nick tells it, how can he get a home without a job? He is caught, he is stuck, like millions of other Americans.

One of the things that keeps Nick from starving, other than the food and the shelter he gets from Columbus House and the local soup kitchen, is the $100 he used to get—until last week—in unemployment insurance. Without that measly $100 a week, things get pretty dire, right now as we speak, for Nick.

The fact is while unemployment benefits make homelessness a little more manageable for a guy like Nick, these emergency funds are often the only thing standing between a family where their primary breadwinner is out of work and a life on the streets. It is during a long stretch of unemployment where these meager benefits become the only way a family can continue to pay the mortgage or the only way a young guy can continue to keep up with the rent.

If we don't restore unemployment benefits now, tens of thousands more people will be living on the street. That is not hyperbole. That is reality. Then they will be captured in that same catch-22 of homelessness: No job without a home. No home without a job.

Like Nick, there are 28 million Americans who have needed emergency unemployment compensation since 2008. These Americans aren't some distant, unfamiliar group of people. They are our friends. They are our neighbors. They are people who have worked their entire lives and want to get back to work again.

I recently sat down with about a half dozen long-term unemployed individuals in Bridgeport, CT, and we see the pain and agony on their faces as they recount their daily hours-long quest to find work, applying to hundreds of jobs, making dozens of phone calls, and coming up empty. There is something almost dehumanizing about that effort to seek work, to prove your worth, and to come up empty time after time again.

One guy I met, Ronny, sat behind a desk his entire career. He worked his entire life in a white-collar job, and he said he would take any job. He would sweep floors. He would do anything just to get back to work. He is not lazy. He is not gaming the system. He is just one of millions who would rather do any job at all than be unemployed.

Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle say they are opposed to extending unemployment benefits because they want to get back to normal with regard to unemployment insurance. But that reasoning totally ignores the reality of this recession. Unlike the recessions in 1982 and 1991 and 2001, the unemployment rate has not fallen after the end of the recession with respect to people who are long-term unemployed. The rate of those unemployed for more than 26 weeks is at the highest today than it has been in 60 years. There are now three unemployed workers for every one job opening, compared to two or fewer workers per job opening in the wake of previous recessions. This just isn't a normal recession. There are more people out of work for longer periods of time than at any time in most of our lives.

If you were in the top 10 percent of earners prior to this recession, things are pretty much back to normal. In 2012, the top 10 percent of earners took home about half of all income in the United States. Those people have recovered. During that time corporate profits were also at an all-time high. For those people and for those entities, things are back to normal. Maybe that is why some Republicans think it is right to bring unemployment insurance back to prerecession norms. But it is not.

One of the hallmarks of this abnormal recession is the number of people who become unemployed and stay unemployed. Forty-three percent of the unemployed people in Connecticut are long-term unemployed, don't have a job, and have been out of a job for months and years.

Rebecca, who lives in Connecticut, emailed my office and she said:

> I am 34 years old. For the first time since I was 16, I am unemployed. I am an attorney, and I apply to 20–40 jobs per week.

Another woman wrote to my office:

> My husband has been out of work for 52 weeks. He spent 30+ years in the banking industry. His last position was as a regional director of retirement services.

Frank from Meriden, CT, writes:

> I have worked all my life—43 years. I was laid off in 2009 and again in 2013. In both instances, I dedicated my unemployed time searching to secure a job. I'd prefer to work as long as I am capable and with your assistance in extending the EUC program, I may at least have a fighting chance of securing employment. Please afford me the opportunity to continue the employment search without the added burden of discontinued benefits.

But we shouldn't only extend benefits because it is the right thing to do. It is also the economically smart thing to do. The Congressional Budget Office tells us that 200,000 jobs are going to be lost this year if we don't restore emergency unemployment benefits. In the week since unemployment benefits lapsed, $400 million has been drained from States' economies.

You see, when we give people support during their time of need when they are out of work, they spend that money—and they spend it quickly. Extending unemployment benefits offers the best bang for the buck we can offer our economy. Every dollar we put into UI returns as much as $1.90 to the economy. CBO says that extending unemployment benefits through 2014 will boost the GDP of this Nation by 0.2 percent. One action of this Congress can boost GDP by 0.2 percent.

No matter what we do, it is still going to be a long road back for those who have been unemployed for 1 year or more, who are going to face discrimination based on their age or based simply on the fact that they have been unemployed for a long period of time.

Just giving them benefits does not magically put them back to work. But the most remarkable thing that you find when you talk to these individuals is that while they are frustrated, their spirit is not broken. Every time somebody sheds a tear to me, recounting their ordeal of unemployment, their story always ends with a hopefulness that employment is just around the corner.

Nick is that kind of guy too. He knows that things are going to get better for him. But as we walked around New Haven in the cold for 10 hours last week, and we talked virtually the entire time, he wondered whether anybody down here truly cared about the dehumanizing existence of being without a job and being without a home. He wondered why Congress would turn its back on him and the millions of others who have been clobbered by the worst recession in our lifetime.

I have kept in touch with Nick in the days since I spent the day with him. Just yesterday he sent me an email. He said:

> I am sitting right now in the Department of Labor office, updating my resume. Chris, I have not had any luck yet with employment but I will keep trudging, just as I am doing in pretty much every aspect of my life. I know it will get better as I continue to strengthen my faith and stay on a straight and narrow path. As long as I continue to do those two things the sky is the limit for me, Chris.

Nick believes that things are going to get better for him. Millions of other Americans who have been out of work for 50, 100 weeks, still believe that salvation is around the corner. All they ask is that we extend some modicum of support to them so they can make that winnowing dream a reality.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, hopefully later this evening or tomorrow there will be a very important vote regarding the extension of long-term unemployment benefits. What that vote is about is to make it very clear which side we are on. Are we prepared to stand with over 1 million workers and their children and say, no, we are not going to turn our back on you, we are not going to leave you literally out in the cold, worrying how you are going to heat your home or pay your rent or put gas in your car or, as fellow Americans, we are going to stand with you and make sure you at least have some income through extended unemployment benefits coming in to your family.

I think, as we all know, the good news is that unemployment has gone down in recent years. When President Bush left office we were hemorrhaging over 700,000 jobs a month—clearly unsustainable, clearly a tragedy for our Nation. Today, while the economy is nowhere near where it needs to be, where we want it to be, the fact is we are growing several hundred thousand jobs a month. That is the good news. The bad news is that real unemployment is close to 13 percent, if we count those people who have given up looking for work and those people who are working part time when they want to work full time.

The even worse news is that long-term unemployment today is almost the highest it has ever been on record. Today it takes about 37 weeks for the average unemployed American to find a job. Today, 37 percent of unemployed Americans have been out of work for more than 6 months. Today, there are three job applicants for every one job opening. The reality is there are simply not enough jobs for the 11 million Americans who actively seek work.

If we do not extend unemployment benefits now for these 1.3 million Americans, the situation will only become worse. By the end of the year, we will be looking at close to 5 million Americans whose benefits will have been exhausted.

I understand some of my Republican friends are saying, yes, we are prepared to extend these unemployment benefits, but we need an offset. Let me suggest to some of my Republican friends that if that is their position—and I should point out that under President Bush, when long-term unemployment was not as serious a problem as it is today, under President Bush, time and time again, extended unemployment benefits were seen as an emergency and were passed without offsets. But if my Republican friends believe they desperately need an offset now that Barack Obama is President, let me suggest a few of the areas they may want to explore.

We are losing about $100 billion every single year because corporate America is putting its money into tax havens in the Cayman islands, Bermuda, and elsewhere. If we need an offset, what about telling the one out of four corporations in this country that today pays nothing in Federal taxes that we are going to end their loopholes. Are we prepared to demand that corporate America start paying its fair share of taxes so long-term unemployed Americans can afford to have food on their table or heat in their homes?

Many of my Republican colleagues believe we should repeal completely the estate tax, a tax which only applies to the top 3 percent of the wealthiest people in America. We are talking about families such as the Walton family who are worth $100 billion. If some of my Republican friends think the Walton family, the wealthiest family in America, needs another tax break while working Americans who are desperately searching for work should not get any help at all, I suggest to my Republican colleagues they are way out of touch with the values of America and the values that make this a great country.

I think there are some people who believe the folks who are long-term unemployed right now just do not want to work. That is grossly unfair and grossly untrue. Let me give a few examples. In Hagerstown, MD, 3,600 of our fellow citizens recently applied to work at a dairy farm to process milk and ice cream. This dairy farm will be hiring 36 people. Yet 3,600 people applied for those 36 jobs. Do those people want to work? They sure do.

Last October, Walmart received over 11,000 job applications for stores they are opening in Washington DC. As we all know, Walmart is not the highest paying employer in America. Yet they received 11,000 applications in the DC area at a time when they will be only hiring 1,800 workers.

That type of scenario is true in many parts of this country. An employer puts an ad in the paper, makes it known the company needs workers, and they are seeing 10 times as many workers applying for limited jobs.

The last point I wish to make is not only is this a moral issue, the issue of not turning our backs on people, some of whom who have worked for their entire lives, at this moment when they and their families have so much need—that is the moral issue—but there is an economic component as well. If a long-term unemployed worker does not get the average $300 check he or she would otherwise get, what kind of money does that person have to spend locally? What the economists tell us is that when we dry up that source of spending in communities all over this country, when people do not have the money to buy the goods and services they desperately need, that in itself, that lack of spending, will result in several hundred thousand jobs being lost in the overall economy. So not extending unemployment not only hurts the individual, it hurts our overall economy, and the economists also tell us that not extending long-term unemployment benefits will reduce our GDP by about .2 percent.

We have a moral issue. We have an economic issue. If my Republican colleagues want offsets, there are more than enough offsets available if they are prepared to ask some of the wealthiest people in this country and some of the largest corporations in America to start paying their fair share of taxes. But the bottom line is that in an economy which today is still hurting very deeply, we cannot punish people who are severely in need.

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 the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, President Johnson 50 years ago, as Senator HARKIN was talking about, declared a war on poverty down the hall in the House of Representatives in his State of the Union Message. A little later he visited Athens, OH, in the heart of Appalachia, and he said:

> I came out here today to see you because we can't always see poverty from the Capital in Washington. But you can see it when you get out and ride the rivers and the range, the mountains and the hills.

When President Lincoln was in office, even though his staff said stay in the office, win the war, free the slaves, preserve the Union, President Lincoln

would say, no, I need to get out and take my ''public opinion baths''—I need to see the people and talk to them and understand their problems.

Pope Francis recently exhorted his parish priests to go smell like the flock, obviously using the allegory of the sheep in the Old Testament and New Testament, but also saying to his parish priests: Understand how people live, talk to them about their issues and their problems and their lives and live among them as much as you can, something perhaps none of us in this body—I know the Presiding Officer from Vermont possibly does more townhalls and meetings with people than anybody in the Senate. All of us need to do that more to understand better.

But as we debate the extension of unemployment benefits, $500 a week is the average benefit; 52,00 people in my State were cut off from benefits at the end of the year, tens of thousands more will lose their benefits if we don't act. It is not just what this means to parents so they can feed their families and continue to look for work. But as the Presiding Officer knows, they need to continue to look for work in order to get this $300 a week on average. We also know it helps the economy.

One hundred years ago this week, Henry Ford made an announcement that stunned the country. He said: Everybody in my auto plant is going to receive $5 a day. Whether it was the young man sweeping the floor or the autoworker, they were all going to receive $5 a day.

Whether it was done out of generosity or not, what Henry Ford knew was putting money in workers' pockets—just the same as when you put money in people's pockets for unemployment benefits, which is the insurance they paid into—the money that they get will help grow the economy. It will help people be able to do things they would not otherwise be able to do. That is the importance of the extension of unemployment benefits, and that is the importance of passing minimum wage legislation, which Senator HARKIN also spoke about.

The fair minimum wage would raise the minimum wage 90 cents upon the signature of the President, 90 cents a year later, and 90 cents a year after that. At the same time it would raise the subminimum wage for those people who work in diners, push wheelchairs in airports, and for valets in restaurants. Those workers often make less than the minimum wage. The subminimum wage—the tipped wage—is only $2.13 an hour. It hasn't been raised since 1991.

The Harkin, Sanders, Brown—and others who are part of this legislation on the minimum wage bill—legislation will increase the tipped minimum wage over time up to 70 percent of the real minimum wage.

I will close with a letter from Karen in Columbus. She said:

> I had to come out of medical retirement because I couldn't make ends meet.
>
> I have now worked at a department store for four years and still don't make $9.00 an hour. My salary goes entirely towards rent and utilities.
>
> My water bill just went up $8.00—

For those of us in this Chamber, if the water bill goes up $8, you deal with it. It is not that big of a deal. She is not even making $9 an hour. The increase in her water bill is 1 hour of pay at this department store.

> My water bill just went up $8.00—as it goes up every year—just like the electric, food, and gas.
>
> Heaven forbid my car would break down or I would fall victim to a serious illness.

I hope that our colleagues are getting their public opinion baths. I hope our colleagues are out among people listening to these stories.

I close, again with a quote from President Johnson's speech in Athens, OH, which was 50 years ago this year.

> Poverty hides its face behind a mask of affluence. But I call upon you to help me get out there and unmask it, take that mask off of that face of affluence and let the world see what we have, and let the world do something about it.

We have an opportunity today to do something about unemployment insurance and help people get back on their feet. We have an opportunity in the months ahead to raise the minimum wage. To restore it to something close to what it was back in 1968 in real buying power, that should be our obligation, our duty, and our mission in the months ahead.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to a period of morning business until 6:30 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak up to 10 minutes each.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. INHOFE. 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.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for such time as I may consume in morning business.

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

GLOBAL WARMING

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, it is a little bit humorous to me that we are talking about extending unemployment benefits in the midst of one of the most intense cold fronts in American history. I saw one newscaster yesterday who said: If you are under 40, you have not seen this stuff before. It has to make everyone question—and I am going to tie this together—whether global warming was ever real.

While I know the leftwing media is giving me a hard time for talking about my opposition to the administration's global warming policies when it gets cold outside, I think it is important to point out two things. No. 1, the administration is intentionally ignoring the most recent science around global warming, and No. 2, global warming policies costing between $300 billion and $400 billion a year, along with the rest of the EPA's environmental regulations, are resulting in millions of job losses.

We are talking about extending unemployment benefits, yet it is really jobs we need, and the jobs are being robbed from us by the overregulation that is taking place in the Environmental Protection Agency, and of course, the crown jewel of all of those is cap and trade. When I say $300 billion to $400 billion a year, that would constitute the largest tax increase in American history.

I find that sometimes when we are talking about these large numbers—and I am sure the Presiding Officer agrees with this—it is hard to relate that to everyday people, to our own States, and to how it affects our families. So at the end of each year I get the total number of families in my State of Oklahoma who filed a Federal tax return and I do the math. In this case, it would cost about $3,000 for each family in my State of Oklahoma to pay this tax, this cap-and-trade tax that supposedly will stop us from having global warming.

It is interesting that people now realize this would not stop it. Even if we did something in the United States, it wouldn't affect overall emissions of CO_2, and that is what we are talking about. That is what makes global warming so important to mention as we debate the extension of unemployment benefits.

If we want to improve our employment figures, what we need to do is stop the onslaught of environmental regulations that have come out during this Obama Presidency.

First, let's talk about the global warming issue. It is interesting that we have often seen global warming related to events affected by unseasonable or unusually cold weather. Often, this has occurred whenever Al Gore has been involved in an event. Let me give a couple of examples. In January of 2004, Al Gore held a global warming rally in New York City. It turned out to be what would go down as one of the coldest days in the history of New York City. Three years later, in October of 2007, Al Gore gave a big global warming speech at Harvard University, and it coincided with temperatures that nearly broke Boston's 125-year-old temperature record.

In March of 2009, Speaker of the House NANCY PELOSI was snowed out of a global warming rally in Washington,